

THE LONDON READER

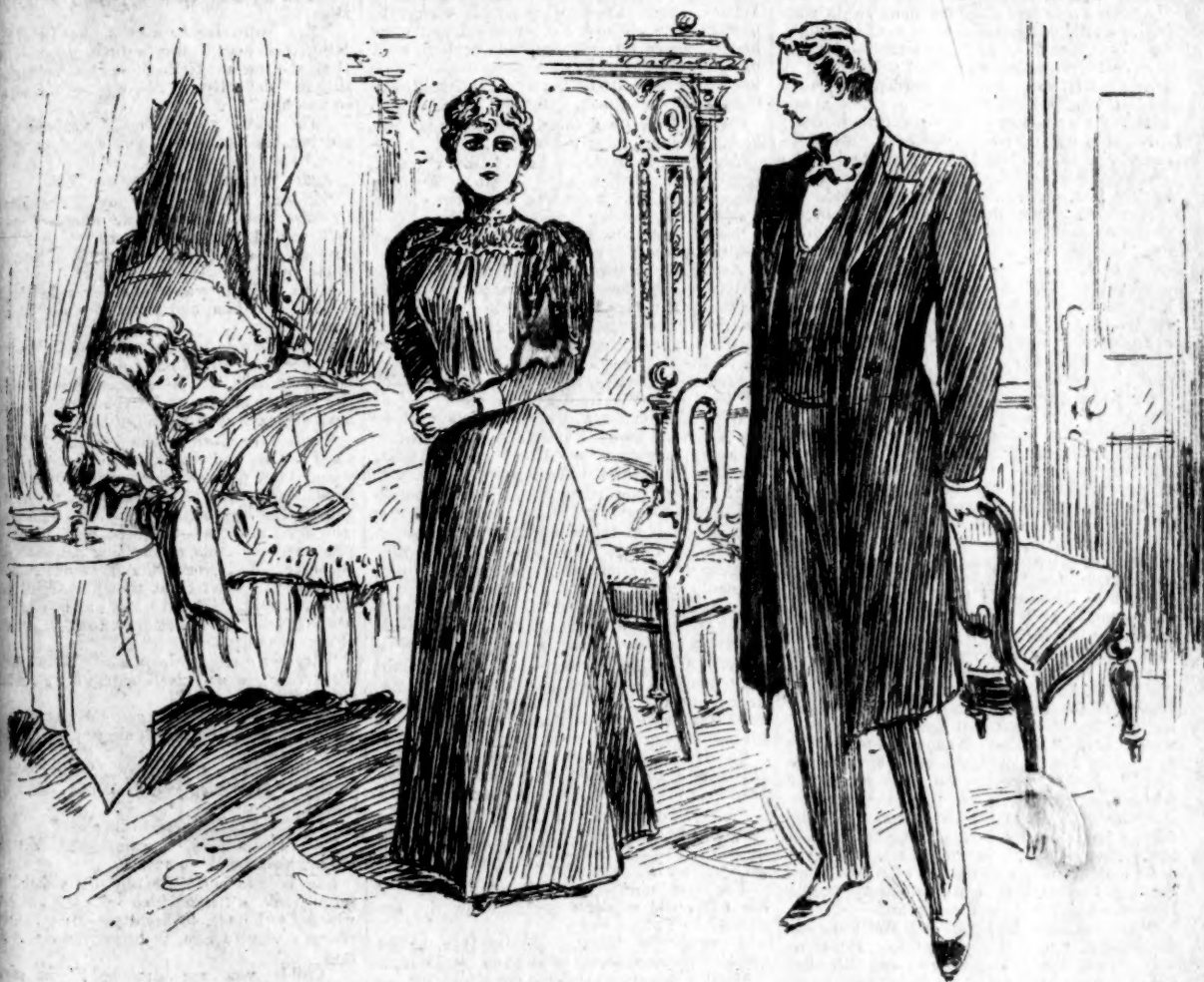
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No. 2086.—VOL. LXXXI.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING APRIL 25, 1903

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



TREVOR STOOD ADMIRING THE SWEET BABY-FACE WITH ITS GOLDEN CURLS.

HIS LITTLE WAIF

NOVELETTE

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

CHAPTER I.

A SMALL room in a barrack-like building at Warminster, a room crowded with attractive luxuries of all descriptions; for Cyril Ponsonby likes to be surrounded by everything that is artistic and pleasing to the eye, and has spared neither time nor money in the embellishing of the bare, shabby little room. Handsome curtains drape the mean-looking window; the floor is covered by a carpet soft and thick; luxurious lounging-chairs are scattered all about; on the dingy walls hang a few choice pictures; while the narrow mantelpiece is crowded by rare bits

of china, interspersed by the photographs of the latest beauties in the theatrical world. A glorious fire burns in the small grate, and before it, on the big skin rug, lies a sharp-looking little terrier, basking in the warmth of the dancing flames. Every now and then great gusts of wind cause the ill-fitting casement to rattle ominously, and the rain, dashing furiously against the panes, seems to do its best to beat them in.

It is a terrible night in late November, a night to be avoided by those who can stay indoors, a night when one positively worships the cheery warmth of a good coal fire. And yet Cyril Ponsonby, sitting at the little table in the centre of his room, seems quite unconscious of the cosiness of his surroundings.

He sits with his elbows on the table, and his chin resting on his hands, and stares gloomily before him, a terrible expression of despair and misery in his clear blue eyes, his

handsome young face quite haggard and aged. He ought to be happy; young, good-looking, an immense favourite, the spoilt pet of the ladies, one would think he had nothing to desire; and yet to-night there is no lightness in his heart, and he sits there in his pretty little room, making up his mind to a terrible deed.

Left an orphan at an early age—an orphan very badly provided for (his father being a penniless younger son of a proud but impoverished family, his mother the pretty daughter of a poor country clergyman)—he had been brought up by his aunt, the rich widow of a City alderman, a stern, ambitious woman, who felt little love for her aristocratic-looking young nephew, and yet did not grudge him money in order to advance him in the social scale.

No expense had been spared on his education, and the allowance she made Cyril when,

by-and-by, he received his commission in a crack cavalry regiment, was extremely handsome. But Cyril was reckless and extravagant. He had plunged into gambling and horse-racing, and lost astonishing sums over these pleasant but expensive little amusements.

Time after time he found himself over head and ears in debt; time after time his indignant relative had rescued him from his difficulties, lecturing him severely, and yet, at the same time, handing over the required sum of money. But her patience had given way at last. When, once again deeply involved, he had made the usual application, she had utterly declined to help him again, had returned most of his letters unopened, and had sternly declared that she would have nothing more to do with him. Cyril, being this time in a worse plight than ever, was filled with consternation by this unexpected severity, and, hardly believing it possible that she could so harden her heart against him, had done his best to convince her that the only course open to her was to come forward again and rescue him from his embarrassed condition. But Mrs. Normanhurst, like Pharaoh, King of Egypt, hardened her heart against him, and refused to be persuaded.

Rendered almost desperate by the thought of all he owed, worried by importunate tradesmen, haunted by the remembrance of his many debts of honour, the young fellow had made one last appeal to his obdurate relation, vowing that, should she free him this once, he would reform, would give up racing and gambling, and, devoting himself to his profession, keep his head well above water, and never make such an appeal to her again.

She had not replied to this last eager request, and Cyril, ever sanguine, had decided gladly that she was thinking the matter over. But, alas! it is not so. This bitter November evening her answer has reached him—a cold, sarcastic refusal to help him, ending up with a few curt words of admonition which goad the young officer almost to madness.

"My last chance gone!" he mutters, grimly. "Heavens! what a fool I have been! Aye, and a rogue, too," bitterly, "for I cannot pay my debts! How can I look the other fellows in the face! They must think me a cheat and a swindler!" With a groan, he buries his face in his hands for a moment, then raises his head, and looks steadily round the fire-lit room. "If I sold all this pretty rubbish I might be able to settle just one of my debts of honour, and what good would that do me?" he muses, wretchedly. "No, no; I can't get out of the quagmire; there's only one road open to me now!" Rising abruptly, he goes over to the window, and, pushing aside the rich curtain, stares drearily out at the blinding rain. "The fellows will get drenched, driving home from that dinner-party," he murmurs. "They'll come rushing in here to tell me what sort of an evening they've had, and how many people have asked after me, and they'll find—"

With a shudder he breaks off, and leans his hand heavily against the curtain. He is so very young—only twenty-one—and life has been so sweet to him. It is hard, very hard, to leave it so suddenly, he thinks, drearily; and yet is it not the best way to solve the enigma? His face grows very stern and hard then; black thoughts, born of all the troubles that beset him, urge him on to that one brief act that shall cancel all his earthly debts, even while the recording angel sorrowfully places the heavy black mark against his name.

"I'll not delay," he mutters, angrily. "They might come back and stop me."

Dropping the curtain, he turns away to a quaint-looking cabinet, and, unlocking the door with a hasty hand, takes out a small, richly-mounted pistol.

"No one will miss me," he mutters, forlornly. "The fellows will be half-sorry, half-contemptuous; my aunt will positively be glad that her spendthrift nephew will no longer worry her. If my mother were alive, I—I—"

Pushing the pistol from him as he sits at the table, he closes his eyes and tries to conjure up the image of the sweet, dimly-remem-

bered mother who had left her one cherished child so long ago; but the longed-for vision will not come.

"And no wonder," he cries, desperately. "How could I expect her to come to me at such a crisis? She is too good and pure, too innocent and saint-like, to have anything to do with such a desperate wretch!" With a wild laugh he snatches up the pistol again, and stares at it meditatively. "My best friend!" he cries, in loud, clear tones; then, lifting his head and gazing round the room, he takes a silent farewell of all that it holds, the tears stealing into his eyes as they travel from one object to another. "Good-bye, Tatters!" he says, softly, to the little rough terrier, and Tatters, little knowing what is about to happen, lifts his head for a moment and wags his feather of a tail lazily, then curls himself up again and begins to snore peacefully. "The fire is his best friend on a night like this," thinks the young man, cynically.

"Well, I must not delay. No one wants me here. I—I am utterly deserted!"

Ah! foolish, reckless heart! Even as he speaks his guardian angel is close at hand, eager and willing to rescue him from such a terrible fate, to spare him on to a nobler life—a life in which this one weak moment shall at last be forgotten!

As Ponsonby lifts the pistol after that one bitter cry, the door is pushed softly open, and a little girl creeps into the room—a fairy-like creature, with great dark, wistful eyes, and a mass of exquisite golden curls falling limply on to the drenched brown cloak that envelops her head. She cries, in sweet, shrill tones—

"I'm lost! What am I to do?"

With a violent start the young fellow drops the pistol and turns to stare at his odd visitor, an angry, impatient sensation in his troubled heart at this untoward interruption.

"I suppose you belong to the married men's quarters?" he says, gloomily, though he stares very earnestly at the little, charming face.

"No, I don't!" she answers, promptly, tugging at the strings of her clinging cloak. "I don't belong here at all. I told you I was lost, stupid!" with a little, impatient frown. "Oh! do come and untie my cloak!" this with a pretty, helpless glance at him.

Cyril bites his lip impatiently. He would very much like to turn her out and lock the door; but the great brown eyes, looking out from that tangle of soft curls, seem to force him to be good to the little maiden.

Slowly and reluctantly he goes over to her, and begins to struggle with the aggravating knot into which she has dragged her ribbons.

"I say, how cross you look!" exclaims the young lady, suddenly, as he removes the drenched cloak. "Ain't you well? Here, I'll give you a kiss, dear boy!"

The next minute two soft arms are round his neck, and a pair of sweet, baby lips are pressed to his.

A wonderful thing happens then. That childish embrace seems to awaken Cyril's soul.

With a mighty shudder he realises that he has been saved from a coward's death—realises, too, the awful sin which he had almost committed.

"Thank Heaven!" he whispers, faintly; "the child has been my guardian angel!"

"It's very rude to whisper," remarks the little girl, reprovingly. "I can't hear a word you say."

And Ponsonby smiles gladly, and presses a kiss on the pouting red lips.

"Wait one moment, baby," he cries, hurriedly; and, with a ashamed flush on his face, snatches up his deadly little toy and locks it away in the quaint cabinet.

"You mustn't call me baby!" remarks the little thing, in dignified tones, as he comes back to her. "I'm eight years old, and my name is Barbara!"

"Barbara what?" asks the lad (for he is but a lad), in a very respectful manner.

The delicate black brows are knit at that question. The child seems to be trying to

remember something—a something that escapes her.

"I don't know," she says, slowly. "Once I had another name, but I can't remember it. Ever since I came away with mother I've only been called Barbara!"

"Ah! I understand!" cries Cyril, a world of light in his blue eyes. "And was it mother who lost you?"

She nods quietly.

"She said she was going for a walk, and took me with her. She told me to wait while she went into a shop, but she never came back to me. I knew she wouldn't, though."

"You knew!" exclaims Cyril, utterly puzzled.

"Yes, 'cause before we came out I heard her tellin' the man I was a little nuisance, and that she meant to lose me. I don't mind, though," defiantly. "She was awful cross, and so was he!"

"The man? your father?" ventures Cyril, putting his arm round her, and drawing her over to the fire.

Again the pencilled brows are bent.

"I don't think he was my father, he was so cross, and he slapped me often. I waited, and waited for mother, and then I came through those big gates and right in here, and found you."

With a little yawn she leans her bright head against him, and gazes pensively into the fire.

Cyril's face is very grave. He knows from her careless words that she has been wifely deserted. She has been a stumbling-block in the path of mother and "the man," and they have determined to get rid of her.

"Left here close to the barracks, thinking she'd run in, and that some soft-hearted officer would take pity on the pretty little thing. Well, the unnatural creature was right. She shall be looked after. I couldn't do less for the one who has—however unconsciously—prevented me from committing a terrible sin. By Jove! Mrs. Normanhurst would think me crazy; but I don't think that jolly old Mother Carew would. I'll take the child to her tomorrow, and then set to work to get myself out of my difficulty."

"Are you going to sleep, man?" asks a saucy little voice, when his thoughts have reached this point.

"No, I'm not," returned the young man, with a laugh, "but I think you are not far off it, Barbara."

"I guess I'm not," she says, patting his chin softly. "How nice you look now—not a bit cross!"

"I think I'm too glad to be cross."

"Ah! that's good," murmurs the child, stealing her arm round his neck.

She is wearing a shabby little dark-blue serge frock, a frock which suits her well, but which Cyril finds, to his utter dismay, as she creeps closer to him, is literally soaked with rain.

"Child, you are drenched!" he cries, anxiously.

"Yes, I'm horrid wet," she answers, with a little distressed shiver. "Let's take the old thing off. Man, you can undo the hooks!"

With clumsy but willing fingers Cyril complies, and a minute later the child stands frockless, the genial firelight dancing on her pretty, soft white neck and arms.

"What's your name?" she asks then, coming close up to him again.

"Cyril—you can call me that. See here! I'll ring for a dear old woman I know, and she shall put you to bed."

"Very well, Cyril," she answers, with sleepy submission; "only you'll carry me to bed!"

"Of course I will. Here, Barton!" as an astonished-looking manservant answers his imperative ring, "send Mrs. Grierson to me. This little girl has lost her friends and strayed into my quarters, and I'm going to look after her. By-the-bye, you don't happen to know her?"

Barton comes close up to them, and surveys the pretty, sleepy creature with great interest. "No, sir," he says, slowly. "She ain't a common child, sir."

"Oh, no!" cries Cyril, hastily, "and she's been heartlessly deserted, Barton." And then he proceeds to tell the man the child's pathetic tale.

"The wretches!" exclaims Barton, in deep indignation, "and on such a night, too! Why, she's drenched to the skin almost, sir."

"Yes; send mother Grierson at once; she must be got to bed. If no one claims her, I shall take her to Mrs. Carew, Barton."

His soldier-servant eyes him admiringly. "That's uncommon good of you, sir," he says, quickly, and thinks it is shyness at being praised that brings deep red to his master's cheeks.

"I'll go at once, sir," he cries, and, hurrying off, is back again in no time with a motherly-looking woman, the widow of a soldier.

"The sweet little lamb!" Mrs. Grierson cries, as she hurries in. "Ah, Mr. Ponsonby, there be some wicked folk in this world! Barton here told me about her as we come along."

"That's right," cries the young man, in relieved tones; then, raising the pretty, drooping head from his shoulder, "Barbara, dear child, will you go with Mrs. Grierson, and let her put you to bed?"

The beautiful brown eyes open for a minute, and the cheery-faced woman is steadily surveyed.

"Yes," says the child, sleepily; "I'll go with her. Carry me, Cyril."

With a tender smile he lifts her in his strong young arms, and with the soft, flushed cheek pressed tight against his own, carries her away to Mrs. Grierson's trim, clean rooms.

"I say, Ponsonby! What's this I hear? They tell me that, in our absence, you have adopted a wandering Westminster infant! Is that true?"

The speaker, a dark, pleasant-looking, medium-sized man, dashes into Ponsonby's room, some time later on in the evening, an excited, curious expression on his laughing face, a little heap of letters in his hand.

Cyril, seated at his sweet-toned piano, playing one of Mendelssohn's dreamiest gems, stops abruptly, and springs up with a little vexed exclamation.

"Don't be absurd, Trevor!" he says, sharply.

"Ah, come, now! I've seen mother Grierson, and she's told me all about it," cries the other young man, in aggrieved tones. "A little saucy puss, with golden curls and dark eyes, so she described your treasure-trove to me; told me, too, that the interesting darling wandered in here quite by chance, and can give no account of her parents, for all her eight years. Seems to me, dear boy, a regular plant."

"No, I don't think it's that," answers Cyril, quietly; "at least, the child has nothing to do with it."

"But Barton tells me that you mean to look after her for the rest of her natural existence!" exclaims the elder man. "What will the chere tante say to that? And—and—er—how will your income stand it?"

Ponsonby shakes his head gravely.

"My aunt has disordered me; she has nothing whatever to do with me; and, for the rest—why, I must leave the army."

"My dear fellow, you can't!" comes the eager answer. "I was coming to tell you the news. We are ordered to India; those rascally Sepoys are showing signs of discontent."

Ponsonby's eyes glitter as he listens. "To India!" he cries. "Ah! that is grand! No, I cannot leave the service now, Trevor."

"I should think not! But you must get rid of this small encumbrance, Cyril; you must not be rash."

For a minute the lad hesitates; then, with

a deep flush on his handsome, boyish face, he turns and grasps the other's hand.

"I can't desert that child!" he says, huskily. "She saved my life, man!"

"What on earth do you mean?" in surprised tones.

"I'll tell you," said the lad, in low, shamed accents. In a few brief words he acquaints Trevor with his rash resolve, and tells him how that sweet, childish voice had so opportunely arrested his reckless hand.

Trevor, listening to those low, earnest words, has grown strangely pale, for he loves the lad well, and cannot bear to think of him sitting in his lonely room, his young heart so full of gloom and despair that he could positively welcome a shameful, ignominious death.

"Bless that child!" he cries, suddenly; "she has indeed been your guardian angel, and you are quite right in your determination to look after this sweet little soul! I'll help you too, lad, even if the aunt expostulates. And that reminds me; there's a letter here for you—just come—a legal-looking document. I'm hoping it's from your aunt's lawyer."

"No such luck!" cries Cyril, with a little laugh. "Help yourself to a cigar, Trevor, while I investigate my letter." He tears it open carelessly, but, as he scans its contents, his eyes gleam very excitedly, and he turns with a quick, astonished cry to his friend.

"Trevor," falters the lad, flushing hotly, "I am more in my golden-haired fairy's debt than ever. This letter is to tell me that I have succeeded to the Langley title and estates, my cousin, old Lord Langley, having died suddenly. Ah, Trevor! do you understand? I am a rich man!"

"I am heartily glad!" exclaims his brother officer, seizing his hand; "and to think, lad, that but for your poor little waif it would have been too late!"

"Yes, Heaven bless her!" murmurs Cyril, in low, reverent tone. "Trevor, I shall take her to-morrow to dear Mrs. Carew. I must see her settled before we sail."

Trevor glances at him curiously.

"You mean to go with us to India, then?" he says, slowly.

"Ah, yes; why not? I've nothing to keep me in England," answers Cyril, quickly.

Trevor smiles in a pleased way.

"I was afraid you'd desert us now you are a lord," he says, in jesting tones. "I'm awfully glad to think that you are going with us, dear boy."

"Thanks!" returns the newly-made lord, and grasps his friend's hand in an expressive silence.

"You'll find your waif a woman grown, when you return," says Trevor, presently, "and a pretty one, too, if Mother Grierson's description is not an exaggerated one."

"Come and see the child," says Cyril, simply, and leads the way to the motherly woman's domain.

"Please go in, sir," whispers Mrs. Grierson. "There is only the young lady in the room who is looking after her, and the child is fast asleep, and she looks like a picture."

"By Jove! the old woman's right!" mutters Trevor, admiringly, staring meditatively at the sweet baby-face, with its golden halo. "Hallo! she's going to rouse up!" But it is only for a moment that the great, velvety eyes look sleepily up at him, then, passing on to Ponsonby, grow suddenly radiant.

"My Cyril!" she murmurs, slowly, lazily; then the sweet eyes close, and she passes again into the land of dreams.

CHAPTER II.

"Mary, I expect a visitor this afternoon—a gentleman. You must have afternoon tea ready in good time."

Her orders given to her bright-faced little maid, Mrs. Carew departs to her pretty drawing-room, and, sinking into a lounging-chair, stares, in a troubled way, at the dancing flames of her cheery fire.

"Just eight years since he brought the dear child to me, and asked me to take care of her,

and now he comes back to find her gone!" she thinks, distractedly. "What a careless, cruel guardian he will consider me! How well I remember that afternoon he brought her to me—the darling, lovely little thing, in her shabby blue frock and the new cloak and hat that he had bought for her. How gently he untied that cloak, and smoothed the silky curls when he had taken off her hat! 'My guardian angel, Mrs. Carew,' that was just what he said as he kissed her. And I promised to guard her as my own until he came to claim her. Oh, dear, dear! what will he think?"

As she reflects thus, a very perplexed frown wrinkles her forehead.

"Just eight years to-day!" she murmurs, leaving her seat by the fire and moving restlessly over to the window, "and much the same kind of weather—a bitter wind and blinding rain."

Anxiously she scans the winding country road that leads from Maveley Station right past her pretty cottage, and, skirting the Manor, Mrs. Normanhurst's stately dwelling-place, runs on in an irregular way to the market town of Basingdon.

"He won't stay here long when he finds out the trick that has been played," thinks Mrs. Carew. "He'll go straight to the Manor and demand an explanation of Madam. Ah, there goes the cart from the Vicarage! The train must be in, then. Yes, yes! here comes a cab!"

With a heavy sigh she leaves the window and hurries back to her chair, starting nervously as the bell is loudly pealed, and she hears Mary's brisk footsteps across the tiny hall.

"I must be brave," she mutters, and, as the door is hastily opened, and a tall, bronzed, handsome man rushes in and seizes her hands, she forces herself to meet his happy glance with a cheery smile.

"My dear old friend! May I steal a kiss?" he cries, laughingly.

"Of course you may, Cyril, my dear!"

"But, dear me! I'm very free and easy. I'm forgetting your title, Lord Langley."

"And you must go on forgetting it," answers the young man, quickly, as he takes the kiss and leads her back to her chair. "I am never anything but Cyril to you, my dear old lady."

"Well, I have always thought of you as Cyril Ponsonby," she answers, slowly, feeling miserable as she notes how the clear blue eyes rove round the little room. "You see, Cyril, you have been away ever since the title came to you, and so the old name comes more naturally."

"Yes, I see," he answers, absently, his eyes resting lingeringly on a large photograph which hangs on the opposite wall.

"Oh, Cyril, why did you stay away so long?" exclaims Mrs. Carew, in sudden, reproachful tones. "I missed you sadly, my dear."

"Did you? That's pleasant to hear," he answers, genially. "I made up my mind to stay out in India until—well, until the child was grown up," with a little nervous laugh.

"When I was ordered home I managed to exchange with another man, and so stayed on. I knew from your letters that the child was safe and well and happy. Her own letters, too, assured me of that. Dear, saucy little letters they were! I have them all here"—touching his breast-pocket. "So I determined to wait until she was sixteen, and then come home and see her."

Mrs. Carew's face grows very grave as she listens to his serenely happy speech.

"You—you must have taken a great fancy to the child in the few short hours she was with you, Cyril?" she says, in low tones.

"By Jove! I did!" he cries, impulsively. "Then every time you sent me her photograph she seemed prettier and more bewitching. That's a new one, is it not?" jumping up and striding across the room.

"Yes, taken a month ago," answers Mrs. Carew, faintly.

"And like her?" demands Lord Langley.

eagerly, his eyes drinking in the exquisite beauty of the flower-like face.

"A perfect likeness."

"Does she remember me? Has she spoken of me?" he queries, hastily.

"Remember you? Oh, yes! 'Dear Cyril Ponsonby' she called you for long enough. According to your wish, I never told her of your title. Then, when she was growing less childish, 'Mr. Cyril' was always her name for you, and every night your name came first in her prayers."

"Dear child," says the young man, in low, contented tones; and then comes the question which she has been dreading to hear. "Where is my sweet wail?" he cries, eagerly. "Surely you have not allowed her to go out on such a dismal day?"

For a minute Mrs. Carew is silent, her grief rendering speech difficult; but at last she looks up, and the young man, seeing the utter misery in her gentle eyes, grows suddenly alarmed.

"She has gone, my dear boy," she falters, and begins to cry in a quiet, hopeless fashion.

"Gone!" echoes Cyril, his handsome face paling. "Ah! to her own people, I suppose? They have found her out and claimed her?"

"No—oh, no! Four years ago an anonymous letter came to Barbara, telling her of her mother's death, and saying that henceforth she was entirely free!"

"Then where is she?" demands Cyril, sharply.

"Ah! that is the terrible part of it. I—I don't know!"

"You don't know!" echoes he, slowly, a very stern expression in his blue eyes. "How is that?"

"It was a month ago, dear," answers Mrs. Carew, seeing it is best to speak straight out. "I went to Baslington to see my sister, and stayed all night. Barbara had a cold, so I left her here with Mary. I came back next morning, and found my maid in great distress. Miss Barbara had packed up all her things and left the house the day before. She had cried bitterly as she said good-bye to Mary, and had told her she was never coming back. She had left a little note for me, begging me to forgive her for her hasty flight. She knew I should be grieved, but, alas! she must go away and hide herself—"

"Was it a—lover?" interrupts Cyril, huskily, a fierce light in his clear eyes.

"Ah, no—no! The darling had never thought of such a thing!" cries Mrs. Carew, vehemently.

"Ah!" ejaculates Cyril, with a sigh of relief. "Then what was it tempted her away? You left her happy. Someone must have seen her in your absence and persuaded her."

"That was my first thought," says Mrs. Carew, quickly. "I questioned Mary, and found that Barbara's only visitor had been Mrs. Normanhurst. She had arrived shortly after my departure, and had had a long interview with the child. I should have thought nothing much of that, as she often pays us a visit; but when Mary told me that the dear child went away in the Manor carriage, I grew suspicious, and determined to go up and demand an explanation."

"My aunt!" exclaims the young man, sternly. "Has she dared to meddle? By Heaven, she will have to answer to me for this!"

"I'm afraid she won't," says Mrs. Carew, sadly; "her obstinacy is terrible. When I taxed her with tempting Barbara away, she just laughed at me, and told me I had guessed rightly. She had acted for the best, she said, in icy, cruel tones. The girl was possessed of a fatal beauty. Her nephew, she knew, was on his way home, and, meeting the nameless syren, would most probably fall in love with her, and make her Lady Langley."

"That I could not stand," she said, coolly. 'The Lords of Langley have always married in their own rank. I determined to see the girl alone, and lay the facts before her. Luckily, she is sensitive and proud, and recognised at once her own doubtful position. She had al-

ways thought of herself as Barbara Carew, your little niece. I soon undeceived her, telling her of my nephew's charity to her, and showing her how necessary it was that she should try to keep herself for the future. She agreed to everything. She would willingly accept the situation I had found for her, and would never, never allow herself to be found by her generous benefactor. She is gone, and neither you nor Cyril will ever see her again.'

"Oh, Cyril! she has a heart of stone. In vain I implored her to tell me where she had hidden the child. I grew even angry; it was no use, I could not move her!"

"But, by Heaven, I will!" cries Lord Langley, in haughty, angry tones. "I will force that meddling woman to tell the truth!"

"Ah, I hope you will, my dear!" exclaims the old lady, eagerly. "Major Trevor did his best, but only met with the same icy reception."

"Trevor!" echoes the young man. "Has he been down?"

"Oh, yes! You see, he knew our sweet Barbara well, and often ran down to see her and have a talk about you. In my deep distress I telegraphed to him, and he came at once, and tried to help me in every possible way! He is even now searching for the child."

"That is good of him," cries Cyril, his face softening. "I remember Trevor was with me the night the child came to me."

"He is terribly distressed at her disappearance, and has done his best to find her, but she seems to have completely vanished."

Lord Langley remains silent for a minute, musing on the difficult question, but at last he speaks, in quiet, yet determined tones.

"I shall go at once to the Manor. My aunt is at home, I suppose?"

"Yes; that is what puzzles me. She has never been absent again."

"Then she took Barbara to her hiding-place the day she wiled her away," says Cyril, quickly. "I wonder if she returned that same evening. You don't know that, I suppose?"

"Yes, I do," hurriedly. "The man who opened the door to me told me his mistress had only just got back."

"A whole day," remarks Lord Langley, in musing tones. "She may have taken the child some distance, then."

"I think she must have done," says Mrs. Carew, following him into the hall. "She would be afraid to let her settle anywhere near here; besides, had she done so, Major Trevor would have found Barbara by this."

"True," he answers, thoughtfully; then, with sudden, wild passion. "Ah! my poor child! my guardian angel! It is hard to think of her in the midst of strangers, my sweet, sensitive Barbara!"

Mrs. Carew, infinitely touched by his eager words, melts into tears again.

"I'm afraid Mrs. Normanhurst will never yield to you, Cyril," she says, mournfully. "She is so hard and proud."

"And so am I," returns Cyril, quietly, his lips set in a very grim line.

Mrs. Carew smiles faintly, and, standing at the door, watches him wistfully as he strides down the garden and out at the little gate.

"My dear lad! I hope he'll conquer madam, but I doubt it," murmurs Mrs. Carew, as she closes the door and goes slowly towards the kitchen. "Don't bring tea in until I ring, Mary," she says, gently. "I shall wait for Lord Langley."

"Yes, ma'am," answers Mary, respectfully; then, in a series of gasps, "Oh, ma'am—if you please—what does his lordship say—of—Miss Barb'ra?"

"He is terribly put out," answers Mrs. Carew, feeling relief in talking the matter over even with her little maid. "He has gone to the Manor now."

"Ah, ma'am, has he?" cries Mary, with a broad grin. "I feel rarely glad to hear that, for sure he'll get the secret out of madam."

"I hope so," returns her mistress, with a little smile.

"Don't his lordship think Miss Barb'ra beautiful, ma'am?" asks Mary, timidly.

Her mistress smiles again, and nods gravely.

"He is determined to find her," she says, softly, and goes back to the drawing-room, leaving the romantic little maid-servant to think delightedly of all that may happen when Lord Langley finds Miss Barb'ra.

Lord Langley traverses the road between the cottage and the Manor at such a rapid pace that he reaches the stately old mansion in an incredibly short time, and, five minutes later, stands facing a tall, hard-featured woman in the prim, ugly Manor-drawing-room, his flashing blue eyes fixed upon her as she coldly greets him, and tells him that she is glad to welcome him back to England again.

"I doubt that, my dear aunt," he answers, coolly. "If you were glad, you would not have prepared such an unpleasant little surprise for me."

Mrs. Normanhurst lifts her steely eyes very steadily to meet his.

"You mean in taking that girl away?" she says, coldly. "Ah, well, you may feel vexed now, but you'll thank me later on for my prompt action. You would have rushed into a rash marriage and repented it afterwards."

"And what right have you to judge for me?" demands Lord Langley, furiously. "I shall marry whom I please, madam!"

"Not if I can help it, at any rate. If your choice falls on a nameless wail, I shall do my best to prevent the match coming off!" she says, in intensely irritating tones.

Deeply enraged, her nephew takes a step towards her, his eyes gleaming.

"If you were a man," he mutters, between his clenched teeth, "I should feel inclined to knock you down; as it is—"

"My sex protects me, eh?"

"Yes, that is so," he answers, gravely; then, in slow, deliberate tones, "Where is Barbara?"

"That I cannot tell you, my dear nephew. I have promised the girl to guard her secret. I do not intend to break my promise."

"What utter folly!" he cries, haughtily. "The child belongs to me!"

"She does not. She is nobody's child, and she herself realises that, and is only too eager to hide away from all who have known her."

"Why did you make her thus wise, you heartless woman?" demands the young man, fiercely.

Mrs. Normanhurst shrugs her shoulders insolently.

"She would have found it out some time," she says, sarcastically; "better now than when it is too late. I shall not betray her to you; only I will assure you that she is well-cared for and happy."

"Impossible!" he answers, curtly; "the child is too tender-hearted not to grieve for the friends she has been persuaded to desert. However, I will say no more. I am only wasting my time. Of course, you will realise that we cannot meet as long as you remain thus obstinate."

"Ah, yes," she answers, readily. "Won't you listen to reason and leave the little nobody in her welcome obscurity?" she adds, mockingly.

"No," he says, sternly, moving towards the door. "I shall seek her until I find her. She shall not remain a nobody; but then I don't believe she has ever been that," coolly.

"What do you mean?" her face suddenly paling.

"What I say," he returns, doggedly. "Many a time I have thought the matter over, and have always come to the same conclusion, that the mother had fled from some stately home, taking the child with her, ruining name and reputation for the sake of some scoundrel. You will remember that the child spoke of her mother; but mentioned no father, only 'the man.' Then she has a dim remembrance of a beautiful house and garden, and a tall, strong gentleman who used to carry her in his arms. There, you have my belief, which is shared also by Major Trevor and my good old friend, Mrs. Carew."

"All supposition," says his aunt, with a cold laugh.

He pauses, and eyes her steadily. "You will not tell me where she is?" he asks, quietly.

"No, I say again."

As she speaks he turns and leaves the room, and a minute later she watches him striding down the avenue.

"Ha! ha! defeated!" she mutters with a loud, malicious laugh. "I am a bit too clever for my haughty nephew. I don't fancy he will get the better of me!"

Lord Langley, recognising the uselessness of attempting to coerce his harsh, ambitious aunt, determines to set to work at once to find the vanished Barbara.

He goes up to London and puts the affair into the hands of a private detective, and himself follows up the faintest, most impossible clues.

Major Trevor, deeply sympathising, goes with him everywhere, and does his best to keep up his hopeful spirit.

But Barbara seems to have disappeared as completely as though the earth had swallowed her up. The detective is still at work; but, as the days go by, and Christmas approaches, Cyril, failing in all his efforts, grows terribly desponding, and in the end makes up his mind to go to Langley Dene—his place in Yorkshire—for the Christmas week, and there think out a new plan of action.

CHAPTER III.

At one of the long windows in Morley's Hotel a young girl sits, one bitter winter afternoon, gazing pensively out at the constant stream of passers by, an interested light in her great brown eyes, and a smile playing round the pretty, resolute mouth, though now and again the sunshine dies away, and a very troubled expression steals like a cloud over the sweet arch face.

"This great noisy London makes my head ache," she murmurs presently. "Ah! how different it is to quiet little Maveley! Oh, how I should love to be walking along the dear old village road! going home again to darling Mrs. Carew!"

With a heavy sigh she turns away from the window, and, taking up a book, throws herself into a chair and tries to fix her thoughts on the page before her.

A very pretty girl is Barbara Carew—a tall, slender creature, with a sweet, perfect face, lit up by the most glorious pair of dark brown eyes—a face attractive in the extreme.

She wears an exquisitely-fitting gown of navy blue cloth—a gown that sets off very generously the shining golden hair and the delicate rose-leaf complexion.

"It's no use!" she cries, in sudden impatient tones, tossing aside her book, and crossing the room to the great blazing fire, on the rug before which is stretched a magnificent-looking mastiff. "Rolf! dear old fellow!" she exclaims, softly, kneeling down beside the intelligent-looking animal, "I am so wretched and—and home-sick!"

Rolf waves his great feathery tail in a lazy fashion, and licks the little hand nearest to him.

"I know it's wrong to grumble, Rolf," goes on the girl, wistfully. "I—I could not have stayed on at the Cottage; Mrs. Normanhurst was right in that, but I could not meet Mr. Pennohy. Yes, yes, I know it was right to come away; but oh, Rolf, it was a hard thing to do!"

One or two shining tears drop on to the dog's head just then, and he—as though understanding her distress—licks the pretty hand in a sympathetic fashion.

"What a baby I am, Rolf!" she cries, presently, bringing out a tiny handkerchief, and hastily dabbing her eyes; "and—and so ungrateful! I should remember how fortunate I am to have obtained such a delightful situation. Mr. Yorke treats me as if I were his daughter, and that nice old cousin of his just

does nothing but spoil me. And to-morrow Rolf, we are going away from this great, bustling place—away to a lovely village in Yorkshire, and you and I will go for long walks across the moor. Ah! dear old doggie! I think I shall feel happier in the country."

Rolf—his great, soft eyes fixed on her face—gives vent to a sudden joyous bark, and bounding up, glances suggestively towards the door.

"No, no! not yet, old fellow!" cries Barbara, with a faint laugh.

With a mildly disgusted look the great dog sinks down again, and the girl, slipping her arm round his shaggy neck, nestles close to him, and relapses into a pensive, silent mood.

Mrs. Normanhurst had certainly done her best to ensure the poor child a happy life.

She had taken her straight up to London, and introduced her to an old friend, Mr. Yorke, and his gentle old cousin, Mrs. Morillon, who lived with him and managed his affairs.

On the journey up to town she had given the girl a slight account of her old friend, and of the affliction that had lately come upon him.

"There is something wrong with his eyes, dear child," she said, briefly. "He is to undergo an operation shortly, and meanwhile has to keep his eyes bandaged, and live the life of a blind man. Naturally, he finds this very tedious and depressing to his spirits, and Mrs. Morillon implored me to find some bright young girl, with a soft, musical voice to talk and read to him. Mr. Yorke himself thinks the plan good, but stipulates that his companion shall be quite a young girl. His own little daughter, had she lived, would have been just about sixteen."

"Poor gentleman!" Barbara had answered, softly, a tender, pitying light in her lovely eyes. "I—I will do my best; but I don't feel as if I could be very, very bright."

"Oh, you'll manage," Mrs. Normanhurst had said, quickly, "and you will find them all that is kind and good. They are staying at Morley's Hotel at present. He is to remain there for the operation, and afterwards to go abroad for a while. If he is pleased with you he will take you with him; the best thing in the world for you."

Mrs. Normanhurst was right in thinking that her beautiful, grave-faced young friend would get on with the invalid and his kind old cousin.

Mr. Yorke had started violently when the girl first spoke to him, and a deep flush had crept over his pale, worn face.

"The voice makes me think of my dear daughter," he had said, simply, "and the name is the same, too, Barbara. May I call you that, my child?"

"Oh, yes! I shall be glad!" exclaims the girl, with a heavy sigh.

She had remembered, with deep pain at her heart, that that was really the only name she could lay claim to.

Matters had soon been settled after that, and Mrs. Normanhurst had gone back to Maveley in an intensely satisfied frame of mind.

But smoothly as everything seemed to go, she was in the end to be defeated, and it was Mr. Yorke who, quite unconsciously, was the first to thwart her and overthrow her schemes.

He had at first agreed to remain at Morley's for the operation; but all at once a great wish seized him to leave the great city with all its noise and bustle.

He owned a small estate on the outskirts of a little Yorkshire village, and he made up his mind to start off to Redmayne at once.

Mrs. Morillon, delighted at the thought of being once more at home—especially as Christmas was so close at hand—bustled about in the most energetic style, and soon arranged everything for their departure; and Barbara, eager to please in every way, devoted herself to Mr. Yorke, and every day found herself growing more attached to the gentle, helpless invalid.

She is thinking it all over now as she kneels beside Rolf, and gazes dreamily into the fire, wondering, sadly, if she shall ever again see

Mrs. Carew and the man who has been so generous to her.

The sound of an opening door rouses her from her reverie. She springs up and runs to meet the tiny, bright-faced, white-haired old lady who comes briskly in.

"I have arranged everything now, dear child," says Mrs. Morillon, taking the girl's hand in hers and softly patting it. "I'm just off to the stores for one or two things I had forgotten. I shan't be long, not more than an hour."

Barbara smiles a little mischievously at that. "You won't be back under three hours," she says, calmly.

"Oh, my dear Barbara, yes."

"I shan't expect you back under the three hours—the stores are very fascinating."

"Naughty child!" cries Mrs. Morillon, with a kindly smile. "What shall you do while I'm away? I won't have you moping and dreaming sad dreams." Then, with an earnest glance at the girl's grave, sweet face, "Barbara, child, Mr. Yorke and I sometimes fear that you are hiding away from kind friends. We know that you followed Mrs. Normanhurst's advice in doing so; but, child, Grace Normanhurst is a hard, ambitious woman."

"I have gained two loving friends," cries the girl, hastily. "I ought to be content."

"But you are not," returns the old lady, shrewdly, "and I don't wonder, if you have been shutting love out of your heart."

"Oh, no! no!" exclaims the girl, passionately, "that is not it at all. I found out something that made it imperative that I should act promptly."

"Humph! Well, I'm not at all satisfied," says Mrs. Morillon, slowly.

"Ah, you must be my best of friends!" cries Barbara, impulsively. "I am only too happy with you and Mr. Yorke."

"That is a comfort to me," says the old lady, thoughtfully. "The life is so dull for a young girl. Mr. Yorke is always afraid of that."

"He need not be," comes the trembling, eager answer. "I am almost quite happy when I am reading and talking to him."

"You ought not to be—it isn't natural," returns Mrs. Morillon, bluntly. "Now, there, child, I shan't tease you any more."

With a little tender kiss, she hurries away, Barbara following her from the room, and going slowly down the broad corridor with the stately Rolf trotting majestically beside her. Pausing before a door at the further end she pushes it open, and goes into the little sitting-room which is entirely devoted to Mr. Yorke. He is sitting by the fire, his fine head thrown wearily back against the cushions of his chair. A broad, white bandage covers the upper part of his face—but Barbara, quick to read his thoughts, knows by the melancholy curve of his finely cut lips that he has either been brooding on past sorrows, or thinking of the operation he is about to undergo. He raises his head as she comes softly in and the sad curve leaves his lips.

"Is that my little Barbara?" he cries eagerly, as Rolf trots up to him, and thrusts his nose into his master's hand.

"Yes," answers the girl softly. "Have I disturbed you, Mr. Yorke?" she asks, as she slips into a low chair beside him.

"Disturbed me! No, child. You have come just in time to dispel the gloom that was taking possession of me."

"Ah! you must not get thinking of that little operation which is to do you so much good," cries the girl, playfully. "Shall I read to you now?"

"No, Barbara," he answers, gravely, speaking her name in a lingering fashion, as though he loved it. "I want to talk."

"Very well," says the girl quietly, flushing a little as he lays a caressing hand on her silky hair. "Child," he goes on gravely, "I was not thinking of that operation. I—I was dreaming of my dear little lost daughter."

"You never forget her, do you?" whispers Barbara, softly.

"No, never. I have thought of her a great deal since you came to us, dear. I—I think you and she would have been very much alike. You know I have made my cousin describe you to me, and I feel that you are just like what she would have been. You have the same golden hair, and dark brown eyes, and you are just sixteen—her age exactly."

"She died when she was quite a little child, did she not?" says the girl, gently, her eyes going swiftly to a photograph on a small table close beside her—the photograph of a lovely, laughing little girl.

"No," slowly, "she did not die then."

"Ah!" gasps Barbara. "How—how did you lose her, Mr. Yorke?"

For a minute he does not answer; then he speaks in slow, unwilling tones.

"Her mother grew tired of home ties and—left me, taking the child with her. I sought for them everywhere, but—never found them."

"Ah, how terribly sad! Why that was almost worse than if your little Barbara had died!"

"It was far worse," answers Mr. Yorke, sternly. "I had the agony of knowing that my little, laughing girl might become acquainted with the scorn of society—that she might even be looked upon as a little nameless wail."

Barbara, listening intently, starts violently. How strange to think that Mr. Yorke's little daughter may have lived the life she had done when a child! How glorious it would be to possess such a noble, loving father as Mr. Yorke! All this she thinks feverishly in the silence that follows those passionate words.

"You would rather have seen her dead?" she queries after a while.

"Yes, my child," in low, tremulous tones. "I thanked Heaven when news was brought to me some years ago, that both mother and child were dead."

"Ah! you heard?" exclaims Barbara, eagerly.

"Yes," sadly, "an anonymous letter brought the news of their death. A tenement house in London was burnt to the ground; they were living there at the time, and perished in the flames."

"And were you thankful?" says Barbara, in awed tones.

"Deeply thankful," he answers, steadily. "My darling was but ten at the time of her death; an innocent child, a little crushed lily, pure and lovely. I could not have regretted her death when I heard of her surroundings."

"No! no!" whispers the girl, in deeply agitated tones. "Poor, sweet little Barbara!"

Mr. Yorke lets his hand slip then, and grasps the girl's trembling fingers very tightly.

"The day her mother deserted her home," he goes on, dreamily, "I had left the house early, and my little Barbara had escaped from her nurse, and run out on to the steps to see me off. That picture never leaves me; the picturesque old house with its ivy-covered walls, and the little fair child at the top of the steps, her golden curls floating in the morning breeze. Many a time I glanced back as I rode down the avenue, little thinking that I had looked my last on my darling, that when I returned I should find no little daughter to welcome me."

"Were—were you at this house we are going to to-morrow?" falters the girl.

"Yes, the same house. It has been shut up for years. I had not the heart to stay in it; but, somehow, child, since you have been with us, a strange yearning has seized me to go down to the old place, and show you where my darling lived. You—you seem to have been sent to me to comfort me."

"Ah! is that true?" cries Barbara, breathlessly. "You—you make me very happy, Mr. Yorke!"

"Do I, child?" he says, in grave, kindly tones. "Well, if that makes you happy, you may believe it. All my trouble and depression seem to vanish when you are with me; I grow light-hearted, and even happy. Now I think we had better compose ourselves with

that last chapter, and then we shall be quite ready for my dear old cousin and her beloved afternoon tea."

Barbara smiles at this, and, picking up her book, begins to read in her sweet, expressive voice.

They reach the quaint, old-fashioned little station at Redmayne late on the following afternoon, to find quite a crowd waiting to witness the return of the absentee Squire.

As Mr. Yorke walks slowly and helplessly down the platform, leaning on Barbara's arm, many a rough but hearty greeting is uttered by the well-to-do farmers, who are his tenants, and who rejoice to see the Squire back again.

Mr. Yorke flushes deeply as these kindly speeches fall on his ear, and leaning heavily on the girl's arm, pauses and thanks them in faltering accents.

"I have been away too long, my good friends," he cries; "but you all know what painful associations surrounded me at the Grange."

"Ay, that we do!" cries a sturdy-looking farmer, Mr. Yorke's oldest tenant.

"The daughter I idolized is lost to me; she died some years ago," goes on the Squire, speaking now with an effort. "My eyesight seems to be failing, and the doctors advise an operation."

Heart-sick and helpless, I was seized with a wish to come among my old friends once more, and—if God saw fit to spare my sight—to live and die amongst you all."

"Hear! hear! Squire!" rolls out along the little station in response to this pathetic speech. "We're main glad to see ye with us again!"

"I have ladies with me, you see," goes on Mr. Yorke, with a faint grave smile. "My cousin, Mrs. Morillon, who has been good enough to travel with me and take care of me, and Miss Carew, who reads and sings to me, and keeps me from becoming morose."

"Oh, Mr. Yorke!" falters Barbara, and blushes deeply as the old farmer, after an intent survey of her lovely face, exclaims, bluntly—

"Well, she be rare and bonny, if it's no offence to say it."

"Not at all, Jevons!" cries Mr. Yorke, eagerly. "I have never seen her face, but I cannot help thinking that she is very like my little lost daughter."

"Maybe, maybe, Squire!" stammers out Jevons at last; "but ye'll not be standin' here any longer, the snow's beginning to fall, and it's a pity to keep them fine homes out in it."

"Yes! yes!" cries the Squire, suddenly remembering that he and his companions are tired and cold.

In a few minutes they are seated in the roomy carriage and bowling along the rough country road on which a thin sprinkling of snow already lies.

"What makes ye look so foolish, Jevons?" demands a young farmer, as the old man comes slowly back into the station.

"Cause I've needs to," retorts the old man, gruffly. "Why, that beautiful young woman as led the Squire along the station is the very image of the Squire's lady—her as broke his heart and left his hearth desolate. 'Miss Carew' he called her! Ah, well, well! shaking his head mysteriously."

As the carriage rolled up to the Grange and Mr. Yorke goes slowly and sadly up the old stone steps, the huge hall door is flung suddenly open and a handsome, lively-looking, middle-aged lady comes eagerly forward, warm words of welcome on her lips.

"The Vicar suggested that I and Sybil should be here to meet you, dear Mr. Yorke!" she cries, cheerfully, slipping a plump white hand into his.

"Is it Mrs. Leslie?" asks the Squire, hastily.

"Yes, indeed! George would have been here too, only he was called away to a sick woman, so I brought Sybil."

"Ah! I remember Sybil!" says Mr. Yorke, kindly, as a small, dark girl, with a bright, sensible face comes forward and takes his

groping hand. "She was a little slip of a girl when I was here last."

Sybil catches the sigh that accompanies the words, and feels very sorry.

"I'm little yet, Mr. Yorke," she says, gently, her bright dark eyes fixed admiringly on Barbara's sweet, shy face. "You are Miss Carew, I know," she goes on, frankly, seeing that her mother is talking to Mrs. Morillon. We have often heard of you. Mrs. Morillon's letters to mother were full of you."

"Were they?" queries Barbara, shyly, and then her great brown eyes rove in a bewildered way round the dark old hall.

"You look puzzled—what is it?" asks Sybil, smiling.

"I—I don't know," falters Barbara, lifting her hand to her forehead in a bewildered fashion. "Have you ever had a certain conviction, Miss Leslie, that a perfectly strange place is not new to you?"

"I don't think so," answers Sybil, slowly. "Do you feel that?"

Before the girl can answer a great baize-covered door swings back, and a line of servants troop in to welcome back their master.

They are headed by the old butler, who now advances to convey to his master their great joy at his return to the old Grange.

He gets through his short speech very creditably, and perfectly beams with delight when the Squire holds out his hand and bids him come and shake it.

He advances smiling, but as he approaches and his dim, old eyes fall on Barbara's lovely, interested face, he utters a sharp exclamation of "Oh! sir, and you've got Miss Barbara back! And she didn't die after all, then?" and grasps his master's hand in a very frenzy of joy.

"What do you mean, Brunton?" demands Mr. Yorke, sharply, growing very pale.

"I—I mean the young lady beside you, sir," stammers the old man, utterly astonished.

"She's the image of—of—"

"Of Mrs. Yorke?" asks the Squire, stiffly.

"Yes, sir," comes the faltering answer.

"It is only a chance likeness, then," says Mr. Yorke, sadly. "This young lady is Miss Carew—my companion and secretary."

"She is, indeed, very like the late Mrs. Yorke," murmurs Mrs. Leslie, carefully to Mrs. Morillon. "Brunton was a stupid to say anything, though."

"Yes," responds Mrs. Morillon, slowly, her eyes fixed very thoughtfully on Barbara's lovely, dreamy face—a queer, startling idea taking possession of her mind.

CHAPTER IV.

The drawing-room at Redmayne Vicarage is emphatically shabby and faded, and yet—thanks to Sybil's skilful fingers—it is the prettiest, most attractive-looking room one could wish to see.

Coming home from boarding school with highly cultivated and artistic tastes, the girl had positively gasped when she walked into her future domain and saw the stiff row of chairs pushed back against the wall, the terrible arrangement of shavings in the grate, and the extraordinary specimens of work in the way of antimacassars.

"Do what you like, child," her mother had said, in her careless, energetic way. "I have no time for such trifles; but you will have plenty of leisure, and if your father will only give you a little money you could buy a few new things."

The Vicar, who simply adored his bright, piquant-looking daughter, had come forward very generously, and Sybil, setting to work in an energetic style, soon transformed the bare, formal-looking room into a perfect nest of elegance combined with comfort.

The shabby old carpet was covered with soft rugs and Eastern prayer carpets; simple yet comfortable rush chairs were scattered everywhere; the great round table had been banished in favour of four or five little Japanese arrangements of light and elegant shape; and all around, on mantelpiece and

brackets and tables, artistically arranged bowls of flowers were placed.

One afternoon, about ten days after the arrival of the people at the Grange, Sybil is very busy in her pretty drawing-room, arranging a quantity of yellow and white chrysanthemums which she has brought in from the garden.

"There! I've finished!" she cries at last, fastening a lovely spray of small yellow chrysanthemums into the bosom of her dark blue gown. "I hope Barbara will come soon. I want to tell her about Lord Langley and—his friend."

A sudden blush dyes her fair cheeks as she utters the words, and with a little confused laugh she snatches up her tray, and flies with it out of the room, returning almost immediately, and flying over to the fire to poke it vigorously.

"Now, that's cosy," she murmurs, drawing up two low, delightful-looking chairs close to the sparkling, dancing fire, "if she would only come. This is such a capital opportunity for a good long talk. No chance of an invasion from Langley Dene. I made sure of that."

She laughs softly, and stares meditatively into the glowing fire, her thoughts so far away that she is intensely startled when the door suddenly opens and the neat housemaid announces two gentlemen.

"Lord Langley, Major Trevor."

"Dear me! I thought you had run up to London," she exclaims, a little flippantly, as she rises to greet them.

"We changed our minds," answers Lord Langley, with an amused laugh.

"Fact is, Miss Leslie, we heard that the Year and your mother were off to York for the day, and thought you might be lonely," interposes Major Trevor, slowly, holding Sybil's hand a little longer than is absolutely necessary.

"How absurd!" exclaims the girl, her pretty colour deepening as she flashes a glance at the plain but pleasant-looking Major. "I am glad to see you, of course; but I should not have been lonely."

"You looked lonely as we came in," retorts Major Trevor, coolly, as he and Lord Langley follow her down the long room towards the genial, blazing fire.

"I was not, then," she cries, with a gay laugh. "I was looking forward to the coming of a very good friend of mine."

"A lady, Miss Leslie?" queries Langley, lending a laughing glance on her.

"Oh, yes," in innocently surprised tones, frowning severely as a low but fervent "Thank goodness" escapes from Major Trevor. "I don't often take to girls," she goes on, in reflective tones; "but I think I have almost fallen in love with the one I am expecting."

"Squire Yorke's young secretary, you mean?" says Lord Langley, quietly. "I heard you were great chums."

"Have you seen her yet?" demands Sybil, curiously.

"No," he answers, indifferently. "The day we called we only saw Mr. Yorke and his nice old cousin; the girl was not even mentioned."

"Which didn't trouble us much, Miss Leslie," remarks Trevor, hastily. "We have heard she is very lovely; but that's nothing to us. Langley is a regular misanthrope, and I—er—don't admire fair girls."

"She has dark eyes, and she is very lovely," retorts Sybil, in dignified tones.

"It's no use, Miss Leslie," he returns, obstinately. "we can't get up any interest in your young friend. Why, we haven't even troubled to ask her name!"

"Her name is Barbara Carew, and—Oh! Lord Langley! what have I said?" in startled tones, as suddenly the young man springs to his feet, and regards her in a wild, excited manner.

"Found at last!" he exclaims, brokenly.

"Oh! thank Heaven I came down here!"

"But—but I don't understand," falters Sybil, in a bewildered way. "Is—is she the

pretty girl you have been searching for, the one you call your guardian angel?"

"Yes! yes! I believe so! The girl whom my aunt so cruelly drove away from the loving woman in whose care I had left her when I went to India. Mrs. Normanhurst told her she was a nobody, and that the only right course for her to pursue was to hide herself away before I came home!"

"Oh! how hard and cruel!" cries Sybil, eagerly, as Lord Langley pauses.

"I have her latest photograph here," says Langley, hastily; "look at it, and tell me if my pretty girl and yours are the same."

"Yes," answers Sybil, promptly, as she gazes at the beautiful smiling face. "Your Barbara is my Barbara; and I can tell you a wonderful thing about her, Lord Langley," she continues, excitedly. "We are sure that your beautiful Barbara is none other than Mr. Yorke's lost little daughter. Father has been making cautious inquiries, and has discovered that there was no positive proof that the child was with her mother when she perished in that London fire."

"Good Heavens! What makes you think that?" stammers out Langley.

"Because Miss Carew is the very image of the unfortunate Mrs. Yorke. Every one sees the likeness—the old servants, the country people—all those who knew the Squire's wife. We wait now for the last proof. To-morrow his eyes are to be operated upon. If he recovers his sight he will be able to see her, and recognise the marvellous resemblance."

"Heavens, how astounding!" murmurs the young man, reverently. "Oh! Miss Leslie! I can hardly believe the wonderful news! Tell me, does she know anything of this?"

"Not a word. My father considered that it would be cruel to excite her until we had sure proof."

"Yes! yes! that is only right," he says, eagerly. "Trevor, this is glorious after our weary search for the child!"

"By Jove it is!" exclaims the Major, emphatically. "And she is coming here this afternoon, you say, Miss Leslie?"

"I am expecting her every moment. Ha! there goes the bell! and hark! that is her voice! Oh, dear, this is awfully exciting!" exclaims Sybil, with a little nervous laugh. "Come into your father's study, and leave Langley to meet her alone," suggests Trevor, eagerly. "I know this door leads into it without having to cross the hall."

For a moment Sybil hesitates, a strange shyness creeping over her.

"Come," says an imperious voice in her ear, and suddenly yielding, she finds herself drawn through the little doorway into her father's cosy quiet study.

Left alone in the drawing-room Lord Langley stands with one hand resting heavily on the crowded mantel-board, his clear blue eyes fixed earnestly on the distant door.

"Are the Leslies right in their supposition?" he mutters restlessly. "Oh! will she ever come?"

As though in answer to the passionate exclamation, the door opens hastily, and a tall, slight, golden-haired girl comes swiftly into the room, pausing and glancing round in a disappointed way as the door closes upon her.

"Why, Sybil is not here!" she cries in surprised tones. "Certainly Susan told me she

Her speech is never finished, for a tall, blue-eyed young man has rushed up to her, and seizing her hands in his, stands looking down at her in a very reproachful way.

"Barbara!" he cries, passionately. "Why did you run away from Mrs. Carew and me?"

"Oh!" ejaculates the girl with a little low miserable cry, and yet blushing divinely. "Is it—is it Mr. Cyril?"

"Yes, child," he answers, tenderly, his blue eyes drinking in the beauty of the exquisite distressed face! "It is Mr. Cyril, or rather Lord Langley. Yes," as she looks up in an intensely astonished way, "I had the title

when I went out to India, but made Mrs. Carew promise not to reveal my grandeur."

"Why," gasps the girl, "you—you called at the Grange the other day, and I heard your name, and never knew."

"All the better for me, my child," he cries, hastily. "You might have run away again; and I have been searching for you so—so desperately."

"Searching for me!" she echoes, wildly.

"Yes, for you, my child! I got home to find you gone. Ah! child! why did you go?"

"Because it was right," she falters in low, shamed tones. "I was a nobody—a wail. How could I stay to meet you, Mr. Cyril?"

"But you are not a nobody!" he answers, eagerly; "and even if you were, did you not belong to me? Had you not saved my life? I tell you, child, that from that first minute when you kissed me I have looked upon you as my own!"

"Oh, don't! don't!" she cries, in trembling, passionate tones. "I was beginning to grow contented—to think of Mrs. Carew, and—and you with more calmness. Ah! I am foolish and weak; but I—I am only a child—only sixteen!"

"But, Barbara, there is happiness for you—happiness for me, too. To-day I have heard something of your patentage; in a few days I promise you, you will own a father of whom you may be justly proud!"

"Mr.—Cyril—is this true?" says the poor child, a deathly pallor overspreading her face.

"No, no! I am not going to faint. I—I never faint"; this hastily as the young man, alarmed by her pallor, puts his arm hastily behind her.

"It is true, dear child," he answers, gravely.

"Only for a few days you must wait patiently. To-night I shall telegraph for Mrs. Carew, she has fretted dreadfully since she lost you—fearing you might be wretched."

"I was wretched," the girl says, simply; "and yet I was with good friends. Mr. Yorke and Mrs. Morillon have been very kind to me."

"I must thank them for their goodness," says the young man, slowly. "Barbara, do you remember that first night when you came to me and saved my life?"

"Oh, yes!" she answers, softly, the tears gleaming in her dark eyes. "How good you were to me, Mr. Cyril!"

"And yet you ran away from me!"

"Oh, yes, because I thought it only right," she replies, her glorious eyes drooping before his passionate gaze.

"But now, dear child, you shall never leave me," he puts in audaciously. "I shall walk back with you this afternoon and tell the Squire the whole tale."

"Oh, no, Lord Langley," flushing hotly.

"Oh, yes, Miss Carew," mockingly. "Hullo! I hear the rattle of teacups. I had no idea it was five o'clock."

"Nor I," the girl says, earnestly; "but—but I must go—Miss Leslie must be out."

"No, she isn't," coolly. "She left me to have it out with you. Awfully good of her you know; but as Trevor is with her, I dare say she won't mind."

"Right you are old fellow! She didn't mind one bit," says Major Trevor, calmly, stepping out of the shadowy doorway, and taking Barbara's hand in his; "did you, Miss Leslie?" glancing backwards at the frowning Sybil.

"If I did, I was too polite to say so," she retorts, as she runs up to Barbara. "Barbara, dear, what a delightful romance this is!" she goes on gladly.

"Oh, how good you are!" cries Barbara, turning and hiding her face on Sybil's shoulder. "I—I feel almost too happy."

"Impossible!" declares Sybil, gaily; "one cannot be too happy—and think how your good friends at the Grange will rejoice with you!"

"Yes, yes, they will!" murmurs Barbara, flushing hotly, as she meets Lord Langley's blue eyes. "Oh, if only poor Mr. Yorke had his little daughter with him, how happy we should all be."

"You must do your best to comfort him, childie," says Lord Langley, with a curious smile, Sybil and Trevor exchange significant glances.

The girl blushes softly, but she says nothing, and a minute later follows Miss Leslie, as she walks away to the low table on which Susan has placed the afternoon tea.

"By Jove, you are making strides, old fellow!" murmurs Trevor, admiringly.

"Yes," returns Langley, carefully, his eyes fixed earnestly on Barbara's pretty slender figure. "I—I don't feel as if I wanted to let the grass grow under my feet. I say, Trevor, doesn't she look lovely in that navy blue gown and hat?"

"Passable!" returns Trevor, provokingly, turning to glance at the girl in her pretty winter costume of dark blue serge.

"Passable!" echoes Lord Langley, indignantly.

The Major fits a pair of eye-glasses on a very snub nose, and scans his friend mildly—

"You don't want me to fall in love with her, eh?" he queries in aggrieved tones; "because I couldn't, you know, I'm settled already."

"No, no!" says Langley, with a gay laugh; "of course I know you admire no one but Miss Leslie."

"Well, not quite that," coolly. "I admit that Miss Barbara is a charming child, and I don't wonder that you've lost your head over her, old fellow."

"Thanks!" says Langley, dreamily. "It may sound absurd, old friend, but I think the child won my heart even in those few hours before we went to India. I made Mrs. Carew promise to send me a fresh photo every year, and each time I gazed on that sweet pure face, I registered a mental vow to win her for my own if I could, and so, in time, grew to look upon her as my little wife."

"Humph! and you are not disappointed in your wife?" says Trevor, quietly.

"Disappointed!" echoes Langley, in low, passionate tones. "No, man; I am more than satisfied."

"I'm glad of that!" remarks Trevor, emphatically, and lounges away to a low seat beside the tea-table; while Langley, following him, seats himself just where he can have a good view of Barbara's lovely flushed face.

"This is a wonderful tale, Lord Langley. A tale that makes me half glad, half sorry. We have grown very fond of the child, even in the few short weeks she has been with us."

"I don't wonder at that, sir," returns Langley, warmly, and with a pitying glance at the upright figure in the great arm-chair, and at the fine head with its carefully bandaged eyes.

He had walked back to the Grange with the excited, nervous Barbara, and after a few brief words of explanation to the astonished Mrs. Morillon, had committed the girl to her kind care, and sought the Squire in his own particular sitting-room.

"You will not let him get excited, Lord Langley?" Mrs. Morillon had cried, nervously. "The doctors say he must be kept perfectly quiet until to-morrow's operation is over."

"I shall be very careful, dear madam," Langley had answered, gently. "I would not tell him to-night, only I know he will be glad to hear of the child's happiness, with a very tender glance at his sweet, shy wife."

The old butler announcing him to the Squire, he had, after a hasty greeting, come at once to the point, telling his tale in the same brief way that he had done to Mrs. Morillon, and had listened with intense pleasure to Mr. Yorke's exclamations of delight.

"You say you have hopes of discovering the dear child's parentage?" observes the Squire, presently, in thoughtful tones.

"Yes, sir; in a few days at the most," answers Langley, quietly. "I have gathered all my proofs but one."

"And you will have that soon?"

"In a few days. I want to bring the child face to face with her father."

"Ah!" The Squire's hand lying on the arm of his chair tightens its grasp. "Is—is he a scoundrel, Langley?" he says, earnestly.

"No, sir; an honourable man," comes the quiet answer.

The Squire is silent after that, and a heavy sigh escapes him.

"Grant me one favour," he says at last, in eager tones. "Leave me my little girl for a few more days."

"Indeed I will!" cries Langley, warmly. "Until your sight is restored she shall stay with you, sir."

"Thank you, my dear lad!" cries the elder man, earnestly. "Will you send my little girl to me now. I—I want to hear her sweet voice once again."

"I'll send her at once," says Langley, quickly.

"Thanks. And, Langley, you'll stay to dinner? I know you'd like to be with Barbara. One of the men will do down for Major Trevor."

"I shall be only too glad," answers Langley, eagerly. "I'll send the child to you, and then run over for Trevor. I have a telegram to send to Mrs. Carew, so I may as well go."

"Very well," says the Squire, genially. "You'll send the child to me?"

"I will, at once."

He goes away, and presently the door opens again, and Barbara, stealing in, kneels down beside him and lays her soft hand on his.

"Happy, dear child?" asks the Squire.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Yorke, very happy!" comes the shy answer.

"But you are not to leave me at once," hastily. "He has promised that—promised that I shall keep you here until I can look at your sweet face."

"I could not have left you until then," she answers, tremulously, and stooping, leaves a soft kiss on the thin white fingers.

CHAPTER V.

"So the operation has been quite successful?"

"Yes, is it not delightful? To-morrow he is to take the bandage off for a short time."

In the drawing-room at the Grange four ladies are seated talking earnestly, Mrs. Morillon, Mrs. Carew, and the Leslies—mother and daughter.

Three days have passed since the operation had been performed on Mr. Yorke's eyes, three days in which he has been kept in a darkened room with the same pathetic bandage over his eyes; and during that time Barbara has very seldom left him, singing and reading to him, helping him in every possible way to get through the tedium of those long, long days.

Lord Langley has been very patient, only seeing the girl for a few minutes morning and evening, content to know that his darling is well looked after by the two old ladies who love her so dearly.

Throughout the grand old house an atmosphere of intense, yet carefully subdued excitement reigns, for everyone knows of the great joy that awaits the kindly Squire when he is able once again to use his eyes.

The servants go about with glad smiles and mysterious glances at each other. The two old ladies nod delightedly at each other whenever they meet, and whisper under their breath of the glorious news.

Lord Langley and Major Trevor come and go in a state of deep excitement, and everyone keeps the grand secret in their hearts, and surveys with kindly pity the two people who are so unconscious of the news that awaits them; those unsuspecting ones being the Squire and the lovely, happy-faced Barbara.

To-day Mrs. Leslie and Sybil have walked up to the Grange, eager to discuss the glorious secret with Mrs. Morillon and the delighted Mrs. Carew, who is staying at the Grange until Barbara leaves it.

"Is the child with Mr. Yorke?" asks Mrs. Leslie, in interested tones.

"Yes," answers Mrs. Morillon. "She will not leave him to-day, he is so excited. She has not even seen Lord Langley."

"I should think not," laughs Sybil. "Charlie—er—Major Trevor says he is quite grumpy in consequence."

Mrs. Morillon turns and glances kindly at the bright-faced girl.

"I think I must congratulate you, Sybil," she says, slyly.

"Oh, Mrs. Morillon! how did you know?" exclaims the girl, naively.

"You called him Charlie, dear child," retorts the old lady, drawing Sybil to her and kissing her fondly. "I am very glad. I like Major Trevor."

"And I too," chimes in Mrs. Carew, following suit.

"Well, he bothered me so!" cries the girl, with a pretty smile.

"Sybil, my darling! what a dreadful fib!" It is Major Trevor who speaks, as he comes slowly into the room, followed by Lord Langley and the Vicar. "Could I bother you?"

"Yes, you do now!" retorts Sybil. "Have you any more news, Lord Langley?" she goes on, eager to change the subject; and, besides, noticing the triumphant expression in Cyril's eyes.

"The last and best," he cries, gladly. "We have at last discovered that Mrs. Yorke was in Westminster the very night that Barbara came to my room, and that she left the town without the child!"

"Oh, that is good news!" cries Sybil, eagerly. "Then it only remains for the dear Squire to see her?"

"Yes, that is all," says her father, gravely. "He will know her at once."

"When is the bandage to be removed?" asks Mrs. Leslie, nervously.

"To-morrow morning," says Lord Langley, eagerly. "Mrs. Morillon, may I go to the Squire for a few minutes?"

"Oh, yes," says the old lady, hurriedly, and looks after him with glistening eyes as he leaves the room.

"What a happy day to-morrow will be, Charlie!" exclaims Sybil Leslie, gladly, as a little while later she walks beside the Major on her way home.

"Rather!" ejaculated Trevor, emphatically, glancing ahead to make sure that the Vicar and Mrs. Leslie are out of sight, and then audaciously stealing a kiss from the ripe red lips before him. "If they're as happy as we are, child, they'll do."

"Charles, how dare you behave so disgracefully?" cries his indignant lady-love, with a nervous glance round at the bare brown hedgerows.

"Have to!" responds the Major, placidly; "you'd never give me one."

"I should think not!" disdainfully. Then in sudden sweet tones, "Charlie, you'll come straight to the Vicarage to-morrow, and tell us everything!"

"Not without you promise me something!" seeing his opportunity and grasping it.

"What?" slowly.

"A kiss!" he retorts, coolly, and waits serenely for her answer.

"You are very exacting, but I suppose I must," she says, ungraciously, and blushes indignantly, as the imperturbable Major for the second time disarms himself.

At last the day dawns which is to bring so much to the patient, sorely-tried Squire—the day when he is to receive his sight again, the day which (although of this he is entirely unconscious) is to give back to him the idolised daughter whom, for so many years, he has looked upon as dead.

The oculist who had performed the operation, an old chum of the Squire's, has remained at the Grange in order to test the success of his experiment. He, too, is in the secret, and is delighted to think of the happiness awaiting his old friend.

"Place Miss—er—Miss Barbara, just where his eyes will fall upon her as the bandage is taken off," he directs in low rapid tones to Lord Langley, as, at the appointed time, they all go gravely towards the Squire's room—the old servants following at a respectful distance, eager to stand outside the door, and listen to the rapturous cry which they know will break from their master's lips.

Silently, gravely, they traverse the little distance to Mr. Yorke's room—Mrs. Morillon, Mrs. Carew, Langley, Trevor, and the anxious-faced oculist. Barbara is already with the Squire; he had sent for her some time before, and she has been talking cheerily to him ever since, trying her best to dispel the nervousness that seems to have taken possession of him.

She is sitting beside him, holding his hand in her firm clasp, and telling him some amusing tale as the others enter the room. She does not loosen her clasp even then, only smiles at them all in a sweet, wistful way—the faintest tinge of red stealing into her pure cheeks, as for a moment she encounters Lord Langley's anxious gaze.

"The time has come, dear Mr. Yorke," she says, softly, and with a little, gentle pressure of his finger. "Mr. Sinclair is ready to remove the bandage."

Obedient to a slight sign from Langley she draws her hand away then, and rising, slips quietly over to where Mrs. Carew stands nodding and smiling at her.

"Stay just where you are, darling!" whispers the old lady, excitedly; "don't move, please!"

Barbara looks up in a surprised way, and has almost spoken, but, her eyes falling upon the oculist, who is already unfastening the handkerchief, she checks herself and watches him with breathless interest. Langley, regarding her eagerly, thinks what a striking picture might be painted, were there but an artist in their midst—all the subjects are on hand for a fine tableau: the grave-faced oculist with his hands on the bandage; the pallid, nervous-looking Squire; the anxious onlookers; and, forming the chief figure in the tableau, the tall, slight, beautiful girl standing just in front of the Squire, her hands tightly clasped, her great, dark eyes filled with tears.

"Now look round, my dear old friend!" cries the oculist, suddenly dropping the bandage, and stepping back a little.

With a little nervous laugh the Squire lifts his eyes.

"I—I can see you all perfectly!" he exclaims, in trembling, delighted tones. "Oh, Heaven! who is that?" as his glance falls on the girl before him. "Barbara! my Barbara!"

"Yes, yes, dear Mr. Yorke!" cries the unconscious girl, flying to him and kneeling down beside him. "You can see me quite clearly, then?"

To her great astonishment, the Squire shrinks away from her, and glances at her in a scared way.

"I see only shadows, ghosts!" he mutters, in sad tones. "Alas! my sight is denied me yet!"

"Tell him all, Lord Langley," says Mr. Sinclair, briefly, seeing how frightened the girl is looking; "it is time he knew the grand news."

Langley, recognising the wisdom of those words, comes forward at once, and takes the Squire's hand in his.

"The child is no phantom of your brain, dear sir," he says, eagerly. "She is no longer a wail, a little nobody, she is your daughter in very deed."

"My daughter!" stammers the Squire; "but—but my daughter was killed, burnt to death!"

"No, she was not," answers the young man, steadily; "that was a false report—only the unhappy woman was killed. At that very time the child was safe under Mrs. Carew's care; the mother had deserted her two years before in Warrister, and I, coming across her,

had taken her down to my good old friend before I went to India."

"My daughter!" echoes the Squire, in bewildered tones. "Oh! Barbara, come to me!" stretching out his arms beseechingly.

With a wild, glad cry, the girl flies into his arms, and lies there, sobbing on his breast.

"Langley!" cries Mr. Yorke, in husky tones, "I—I cannot thank you for all your great goodness to my child. I shall always be in your debt."

"I don't think so," returns the young man, gravely, his eyes fixed on that golden head lying on the Squire's breast. "After a time you may repay me, sir."

And the Squire, understanding the significant tones, smiles and sighs.

Suddenly Barbara lifts her head and looks anxiously at Mr. Yorke.

"Am I really your daughter—Barbara Yorke?" she asks, earnestly.

"My darling, yes!" cries her father, fondly.

"We have every proof needed," says Langley, coming close up to them. "The Vicar and I followed up every clue."

"Then Mrs. Normanhurst's fears were foolish ones?" says the girl, with a swift, sly glance at the eager, handsome face before her.

"Quite," with a frown. "She will feel rather silly when she hears that you are Miss Yorke, of Yorke Grange."

The girl smiles, gladly, and turns to receive the delighted congratulations of the two old ladies and the beaming Major.

"You are my cousin, Mrs. Morillon!" she cries, with a little glad laugh. "To think of that! I can't realise that I really belong to this house."

"But I can!" exclaims the Squire, hastily. "Mary," looking at his cousin, "are the servants anywhere near? I—I should like to show them their young mistress."

"Oh, no! no!" cries the girl, confusedly.

But it is too late; the delighted Mrs. Morillon has already summoned the waiting servants, and in a moment the little room is crowded.

"Langley, will you tell them for me?" says the Squire, turning involuntarily to the handsome young nobleman; and he, with a grave bow, steps forward and tells the wonderful tale to the beaming crowd.

As he finishes there is silence for a minute, then the grey-haired butler steps forward, and, in trembling tones, speaks for himself and his fellow servants.

"My dear master," he says, in shaky accents, "we be all main glad to meet your glance again, and only hope you'll live long to enjoy your sight; and we offers our hearty, but respectful, welcome to the beautiful young mistress, and trusts she'll be with us for many a year, though I'm doubtful of that," he adds, quaintly, with a shrewd glance at the blushing girl and the handsome nobleman beside her.

"Thank you, my good people," cries the Squire, heartily. "Christmas Day is close at hand. You must drink then to the health of the young mistress."

With many a murmured "Thank you, sir. Long life to you and her" the servants troop away, delighted with the little shy smile they receive from Barbara as they file past her.

"You look tired, old friend," observes Mr. Sinclair, gravely, when the room is cleared. "This has been an exciting time for you, and the best thing you can do is to take an hour's rest."

"Yes! yes! take care of yourself, dear father!" whispers Barbara, shyly.

The Squire draws her down beside him and kisses the pretty red lips.

"Don't preach, old friend," he says, gaily. "I feel remarkably well."

"You must keep quiet all the same," retorts Mr. Sinclair. "And, by-and-by, when the Christmas festivities are over, you should go abroad. You want a change now, and you have a charming daughter to accompany you."

"Yes, I shall be always with you, father," cries the girl, tenderly.

The Squire laughs mischievously, and glances at Langley's serious face.

"Not always, child," he says, softly. "I am not quite so selfish. For a year or two I may hope to keep you, for as yet you are too young to think of marrying."

Barbara blushes deeply, and Langley, turning swiftly, meets the Squire's glance, and knows that he understands.

"In a short time," continues Mr. Yorke, quietly, "we will go to Nice and spend the rest of the winter there—Barbara and I and our two dear old ladies. No! no! Mrs. Carew, it's no use objecting. You must come! Langley," with another mischievous smile, "will you join us about Easter?"

"With pleasure, sir!" exclaims the young man, with a delighted smile.

"Perhaps you'll see me there, too," remarks Major Trevor, slowly. "If I can only persuade my wiful Sybil that April is the best month for a wedding, we might go to Nice on our honeymoon."

"Of course you might!" exclaims the Squire, with a laugh. "Sybil must listen to reason and come to Nice."

Seeing Mr. Sinclair glancing anxiously at his patient, Langley declares they must be going, and drags his friend away from the little room.

"By Jove! Everything has turned out splendidly!" cries Trevor, as they reach the hall and begin to get into their heavy overcoats. "Langley, if you don't mind, I'll run round by the Vicarage. I promised Sybil I'd come."

"Oh, go, of course. I mean to walk down to the post-office and send a revengeful telegram to my grim aunt. I want to see Mrs. Carew, though, before I go," with an eager glance up the wide staircase.

"Do you? Then I'll be off," says Trevor, with a little slow smile.

He tramps away down the snow-covered avenue, and Langley stands with his hands in his pockets, looking dreamily after him, and meditating so dreamily that he never knows that a slender, girlish figure has stolen down the stairs and is standing just beside him.

"Lord Langley!" says a timid voice, and, turning with a violent start, he sees the girl who holds his heart.

"What is it, child?" he asks, gently, seeing that her lips are quivering painfully.

"I—I thought you would think me cold and ungracious, Mr. Cyril," she whispers, using the old name involuntarily. "You have been so good to me, and I—I said nothing up there. But it was only because my heart was full, and I could find no words to express my gratitude and—affection."

"Hush, child!" he answers, kindly, taking her hands in a firm clasp, and bending to look into her shy, dark eyes. "You must not try to thank me. You shall do that in Nice when I come."

He says no more; but, stooping, leaves a passionate kiss on the little hands, and, loosing them, hurries sharply away, quite forgetting that he had been waiting for Mrs. Carew.

"How good he is!" murmurs Barbara, lifting her hands to her hot cheeks. "Yes, yes! I shall thank him in Nice, if I can."

With a little nervous laugh she lifts her hands, and softly kisses the place where his lips had rested; then blushing deeply, turns and flies upstairs.

It is Easter, and Nice is crowded with visitors. All the hotels are coining money, the prices having risen enormously, and people seeming ridiculously willing to pay exorbitantly for everything.

Squire Yorke, with his daughter and the two old ladies, is staying at the Hotel des Anglais, and having been there since the beginning of January, has almost the best rooms in the hotel—the spacious sitting-room having windows commanding the Mediterranean on the one side and the Public Gardens on the other.

Mr. Yorke is feeling perfectly strong by this—his sojourn in this lovely sheltered spot having done him a world of good. His eye-

sight seems better than ever, and he is in the best of spirits.

"Where are you off to, darling?" he asks, quickly, one morning, as Barbara enters the room dressed for walking. "Don't go far. Remember the Trevors may be here at any minute."

"I shall only go into the gardens, father," says the girl, picking up a book and stooping to kiss his forehead as he bends over a heap of letters.

"Oh! that's right enough, child!" he answers, fondly, with a delighted glance at the sweet face under the becoming hat. "And Langley might be here to-day," he ventured with a sly look at her.

"I suppose so," she says quietly, though she blushes hotly at the same time.

She strolls away then, leaving the Squire to muse delightedly on the happiness in store for his child, and to build innumerable gorgeous castles in the air.

Barbara runs swiftly down to the gardens, and, throwing herself on to a bench, opens the book she has brought with her. But she does not read a word. Her beautiful eyes wander away to the blue sea, and her thoughts are on what her father had said a few minutes ago.

"He may come to-day!" she murmurs, her heart beating madly; "and then he will claim his reward. Oh! what shall I say?" she cries aloud, involuntarily.

"You need only utter one word, child!" says a tender voice behind her, and a moment later Lord Langley has taken her hands, and is gazing into her sweet, shy eyes.

"My own love! my guardian angel!" he goes on softly.

"Yes, Cyril," she falters out, with sweet, shy courage, blushing hotly as, with a low glad cry, he takes her in his arms and kisses her passionately.

"My own love! my guardian angel!" he murmurs, in agitated tones.

"Nay, your little wail!" she says, with a grave shake of her pretty head. "Oh, Cyril, how good you were to me!"

"And you saved my life, dearest," he cries, tenderly, "we have each a debt to pay;" and she smiles very brightly at her noble lover; and, lifting her exquisite blushing face, pays him back a little of her debt.

"Let us come to father now," she says, then, in hasty tones. "He will be longing for us;" and slipping her hand in his she walks beside him to the hotel, in a very happy silence.

[THE END.]

A MEMORY

Oh, the old farmhouse! I see it still,

Wherever my feet may roam.

It stood close under the shady hill,

This old remembered home.

And the ivy trailed in a cluster green

Where the light of morning shone,

And the linnets sang in the rosy sheen,

And the eerie wind made moan.

I see it still, and I hear the shout

Of the children at their play,

Out on the sward in a merry rout,

Laughing the hours away.

And there on the porch a woman fair

Smiles sweet on the romping glee.

Ah, mother mine, with the beauty rare,

You sleep by the summer sea.

The old farmhouse is grey with years,

The children scattered wide.

Where clung the vine not a leaf appears

To tell of its olden pride.

But where'er I be, on land or sea,

I dream that I see it still,

The old farmhouse of my infancy,

Under the shade of the hill!

Why are the wearers of moustaches and beards the most modest men in society? Because they are the least barefaced.

SOME OLD ENGLISH EPITAPHS.

Epitaphs that can be termed ridiculous and nonsensical are happily "few and far between," though not so rare as we must wish. On the headstone of William Rymour, Cupar-Fife, we read:—

"Through Christ I am not inferior
To William the Conqueror!"

Quite true, but rather a far-fetched comparison.

The following is simple at all events, and is to be found in West Churchyard, Trarant:—

"Trumpets shall sound, archangels cry,
'Come forth, Isabel Mitchell, and meet Wil-
liam Mathison in the sky.'"

Here is a very precise inscription on a soldier, in the kirkyard of Dumfries:—

"Here lies Andrew Macpherson,
Who was a peculiar person,
He stood six foot two
Without his shoe,
And was slow
At Waterloo."

The next is less communicative:—

"Here lies wrapt in clay
The body of William Wray,
I have no more to say."

Jane Curthwaite's epitaph at St. Angus, Corn-
wall, has a very cruel remark:—

"Here lies the body of Jane Curthwaite,
Born at St. Colomb, died at St. Cus;
Children she had five,

Three are dead and two alive;
Those that are dead, choosing rather
To die with their mother than live with their
father."

Can anything be more simply pathetic and touching than:—

"Beneath this stone our baby lies,
He neither cries nor hollers—
He lived just one and twenty days,
And cost us forty dollars!"

"Save us from our friends!" A Canadian tombstone has:—

"John Phillips, accidentally shot, as a
Mark of affection by his brother!"

The distinguishing feature in many epitaphs of this class is that of a pun upon the name, occupation, etc., of the departed; as on Wil-
liam Stone:—

"Jerusalem's curse is not fulfilled in me,
For here a stone upon a Stone you see."

On John White, in the Temple Church,
London:—

"Here lies John, a burning, shining light,
Whose name, life, actions, were alike—*White*."

We copy the following from "Delights for the Ingenious" for 1711 on Thomas Kitchen:—

"If Kitchen was his name, as I have found,
Then death now keeps his Kitchen under-
ground;

And hungry worms, that late of flesh did eat,
Their Kitchen now devour instead of meat."

At Norwich on Mr. Foote:—

"Here lies one Foote, whose death may thou-
sands save,
For death has now one foot within the grave."

And the famous one on Sir John Strange:—

"Here lies an honest lawyer,
That is *Strange*."

We can scarcely credit that the epitaph on Dean Cole, in Lincoln Cathedral, was written by his daughter:—

"When the latter trump of heaven shall blow,
Cole, now raked up in ashes, then shall glow."

On the tomb of Sir John Vanbrugh, the architect:—

"Lie heavy on him, earth, for he
Laid many a heavy load on thee."

And on that of another architect, Tro-
lope:—

"Here lies William Trollope,
Who made these stones roll up;
When death took his soul up,
His body filled this hole up."

In Uddlestone Churchyard is another on James Peck:—

"Here lies a Peck, which some men say
Was first of all a Peck of clay;
This wrought with skill divine while fresh,
Became a curious Peck of flesh.
Through various forms its Maker ran,
Then added breath, made Peck a man;
Full sixty years Peck felt life's bubbles,
Till death relieved a Peck of troubles;
Then fell poor Peck, as all things must,
And here he lies—a Peck of dust!"

In Bath Abbey churchyard:—

"Here lies Ann Mann;
She lived an old maid, and died an old
Mam."

On a stone in a village churchyard in the county of Essex, erected to the memory of Richard and his wife, Mary Pritchard:—

"Here lies the man Richard,
And Mary his wife;
Their surname was Pritchard—
They lived without strife;
And the reason is plain—
They abounded in riches,
They no care had nor pain
And the wife wore the breeches."

In Streattham churchyard is the following epitaph, which as they go nowadays our readers will find hard to believe—but then it is an epitaph:—

"Elizabeth, wife of Major-General Hamilton,
Who was married nearly 40 years, and
Never did one thing to disoblige her
Husband! She died in 1746."

On a tombstone in North Curry churchyard, Somerset, is inscribed:—

"My good lads, do not sit on this stone on
account you do disfigure it with your heels;
lean on it if you please. Yours, etc.,
R. Pocock."

In Gloucester, on a young man named Edward Calf:—

"O cruel Death, more subtle than a fox,
To kill the calf before he 'came an ox."

In Cheltenham churchyard, on a miser:—

"Iron was his chest,
Iron was his door,
His head was iron,
And his heart was more."

In Fibres churchyard, Westmoreland:—

"Here lie the bodies of Thomas Bond, and Mary, his wife. She was temperate, sober, chaste and charitable; but she was proud, peevish and passionate. She was an affectionate wife and a tender mother; but her husband and child, whom she loved, seldom saw her countenance without a disgusting frown, while she received visitors, whom she despised, with an endearing smile. Her behaviour was discreet towards strangers but impudent in her family. Abroad her conduct was influenced by good breeding, but at home by ill temper. The husband feels it his duty to give her all the justice he can after full consideration. July, 1747."

THERE'S no disgrace in being poor. The thing is to keep quiet and not let your neighbours know anything about it.

An old woman was praising, in rather enthusiastic terms, the sermon of a Scotch minister who had acquired a great name for depth and sublimity. The suspicions of her auditor were aroused, and she ventured to ask: "Well, Jenny, do you understand him?" "Understand him!" holding up her hands in astonishment at the question. "Me understand him! Wad I hae the presumption!"

Gleanings

PICTORIAL POSTCARDS.—In Italy, each regiment has its own pictorial postcards, on which are the devices of the regiment, the list of battles in which it has taken part, or one of the heroic episodes in which it has figured. These are sold at moderate prices to officers and soldiers, and their use in correspondence serves to spread the prestige of the regiment.

THOSE LITTLE GLASS BOXES.—Having occasion to prescribe an extremely unpalatable dose for a patient, and wishing to make the situation as pleasant as possible for the sufferer, a physician ordered the medicine to be put up in gelatine capsules. On his next visit the patient—a woman, by-the-way—said: "Doctor, I took that medicine, and it did me some good, but I had a terrible time to open those little glass boxes it was in. The next time you give me anything like that, won't you please get the druggist to see that the little glass boxes come apart more easily?"

THE MIND AND THE BODY.—Speaking on the influence of the mind on the body, a noted medical writer thinks there is nothing improbable in Herodotus's story of the dumb son of Croesus, who suddenly found his speech when he saw a soldier raising his sword, and exclaimed, "Do not kill Croesus." Medical records, he says, contain well-attested cases of dumbness cured by sudden fright. Hysteria and epilepsy also have been thus benefited. A physician in a lunatic asylum not long ago cured a hypochondriac by sending him a number of violently abusive postcards. The anger at them and the eagerness to find out who wrote them diverted the patient's mind, and he improved rapidly.

ICE-MAKING TO ORDER.—A stout framework is built, upon which loose poles are laid, and a three-quarter inch or inch pipe is erected in the centre of the framework. This pipe should project about a foot above the top of the frame, and should be coupled with a lawn-sprinkler, which revolves when the water is turned on. The water is thus distributed all over the area of the frame, and, dripping from the poles, soon forms long icicles. When these are large enough, the water is turned off, the icicles knocked down, and the ice shovelled into the ice-house. This framework may be built directly over the ice-house, or situated on an elevation near it, so that the ice may be shovelled on to an inclined trough placed between the bottom of the frame and the ice-house. This is a common plan in Switzerland when pure ice is not to be had near by. One of the largest Canadian creameries has tried the method, and finds it satisfactory, and that not much labour is required.

WOMEN WHO LIVED AS MEN.—In all countries and in all ages there have been women who have lived as men without their secret being discovered. Perhaps the best-known instance is that of the celebrated James Barry. In the early part of the last century this person was actually serving as a doctor in the English army. While employed in this capacity she was stationed successively in South Africa, Malta, and the West Indies. At Cape Town, on one occasion, she fought a duel with an officer who had taunted her with effeminacy! Authentic instances of women serving as soldiers without their sex being known are furnished by the official records of the American Civil War. Among the cases brought to light is that of Charlotte Lindley, who, as a private soldier, took part in the battles of Fort Mifflin and Bull Run. Another woman, Frances Day by name, attained the rank of sergeant, and was killed in action. On several occasions soldiers were discharged from the army on account of their being found to be women. Among the different vocations which American women, while successfully posing as men, have followed may be mentioned those of mining, hair-cutting, printing, bookbinding, and piano-tuning.

HIS BURNING LOVE.—It was in a country village that the swain had proposed for the hand of the village beauty, and had been successful and carried off the palm. He had bought the engagement-ring, and was hurrying as fast as his two feet would carry him to the home of his adored one. A friend tried to stop him to make inquiry concerning his haste. "Hello, there, Bob! Is there a fire?" "Yes," replied Bob, with what breath he had left; "my heart's on fire, and I'm going now to ring the village bells."

DISCOVERED.—Some years ago, when I returned from India for my discharge (says a writer in a popular military weekly), a man of my regiment who had "put on the deaf" to work his ticket came home with me in the same ship. When we landed in England we were all sent to Netley Hospital. The next morning we were inspected by the doctor, but some doubt arose as to the genuine character of this man's deafness, as he had made out that he could not hear a gun fire. He managed to gull the doctors of the regiment and many others of the station, but not so with the doctors at Netley. They had their eyes upon him. One day he was walking ahead of me down a passage leading to the garden, and the doctor was coming along just behind me. I turned round, but the doctor put up his hand to make me understand that he did not want his presence made known to the deaf man. When the doctor got up to me he let fall a handful of silver on the stone floor of the passage, making a clatter. The moment the money dropped the deaf man turned round to scramble after the coins.

FRUIT AND VEGETABLE DRYING.—Several very interesting experiments in fruit and vegetable drying have been carried out at Northampton Farm, Worcester, England, with the new apparatus which has proved so successful for hop drying. The invention consists in drawing the hot air into a grid-work of steam pipes, through which air passes into the chamber beneath a "slotted" floor, on which the hops are placed. This method of heating the air prevents the assimilation of sulphurous gases by the products treated, and makes burning impossible. Samples of carrots, potatoes, sliced and shredded apples, and other fruits and vegetables were submitted to temperatures ranging from ninety to one hundred and forty degrees. After six hours all were in the state of dryness required for commercial purposes. The cost of working the system is trifling, and it is expected that a new agricultural industry will soon be opened in which English fruit growers may successfully compete with the Germans, who now export about seven hundred thousand dollars' worth of dried fruit and vegetables annually to Great Britain.

THE HISTORY OF THE CANARY.—About three hundred and fifty years ago a ship, returning from the islands in the Atlantic which people then called the "Fortunate Isles," but which were undoubtedly the Canaries, went ashore on the coast of Italy, near Leghorn. A cage of beautiful birds captured in those islands was broken, and the birds were liberated. Through some caprice they did not take refuge on the mainland, but went to the island of Elba, where in due time they nested and bred and increased in numbers. The Italians discovered that they were admirable singers, and began to capture them and sell them in cages. This gave rise to a traffic which soon completely cleared the island of Elba of "canary birds," so that not one was left there in a wild state. From that time the history of the canary has been a record of perpetual imprisonment and transformation of his appearance and character. In their natural state, as they still exist in the Canary and Madeira and other Atlantic islands, the birds are of a greyish green or greenish brown colour, and are not remarkable for beauty, but they have been known to burst the membranes of their throats in pouring forth their song.

TO PREVENT RUST.—Two coats of hot oil, carefully applied after thorough cleaning of the metal, are recommended by a Canadian artisan as an improvement over any process now in use for preventing rust of structural iron and steel. The oil would fill crevices, cracks, and holes where paint cannot enter. It would cover rough places often imperfectly coated in ordinary painting, and it would be a fine preparation for subsequent painting or covering with cement coating.

LIKE LOT'S WIFE.—The Americans may be a shrewd and practical people, but their newspapers tell us the fairy stories of modern times. For instance, there is a story circulated recently which would never have originated with us. It is a new version of the fate which overtook Lot's wife. A drunken woman, prevented from entering a shrine at Bagos, in Mexico, swore horribly at the priests, and whilst in the act of cursing a bolt fell from the sky, turning her into a rock statue. The piece of statuary was removed to the dwelling of a priest, who is now exhibiting it at a charge of fifty cents a head. This last touch is so modern and credible that it provides the jam which makes the pill easy to swallow.

A LUNCH BEFORE RETIRING.—The theory that late suppers are injurious is not supported by facts in all instances. Many who remain thin and weakly, in spite of all precautions in regard to diet, owe the fact largely to habitual abstemiousness at night. Physiology teaches us that, in sleeping as in waking, there is a perpetual waste going on in the tissues of the body, and it seems but logical that nourishment should be continuous as well. All creatures outside of man are governed by a natural instinct which leads them to eat before lying down for the night. The digestive organs have no need for repose, providing always that the quantity of nourishment taken within the twenty-four hours does not go beyond the normal limit. The fact that the intervals between meals are short works no inconvenience, but, on the contrary, tends to the avoidance of feebleness, which is the natural result of an interval extended to too great a length. Feeble persons, lean and emaciated people, and, above all, those suffering from insomnia, owe it to themselves not to retire without taking some nourishment into the stomach—bread and butter, a glass of rich milk, a few crackers, or even a bit of juicy cold meat, for instance.

DRINK AT MEALS.—In an interesting and somewhat historical article Dr. C. A. Ewald, of Berlin, discusses the mooted question of drink at meals. He considers soup, because of its small percentage of nourishing material, merely as fluid; he states that, aside from what is directly taken as drink, much fluid reaches the stomach during a meal, through the sauces and from the water percentage (both natural and by cooking) of the meats, vegetables, et cetera. Most persons feel the necessity of adding more fluid to the meal by drinking either ordinary water, carbonated waters, or alcoholic beverages. The more one eats, generally, the more one drinks, and the greatest eaters are generally the greatest drinkers. If drink be prohibited, the amount eaten is less; indeed, on the above very greatly depends the secret of the "Schwein cure" for obesity. It is a well-known fact that if the appetite is weak and the mind and nerves are somewhat relaxed, a drink of water will excite the appetite and stimulate both brain and nerves; and this is due directly to the fluid and not to alcohol, for we find the results to be the same in abstainers. The more fluid in the way of gastric juice, the greater is the quantity secreted; hence the greater the tax upon the gastric glands. Under normal circumstances, however, the stomach, without detriment, accommodates itself to a range of large quantities of fluid. Ewald says that much of the fluid passes into the intestines, another portion is absorbed; hence there never is in the normal stomach a stagnation of large quantities of liquid.

KIT

By EFFIE ADELAIDE ROWLANDS

Author of "Unseen Fires," "Woman Against Woman," "Her Mistake, etc., etc."

CHAPTER XIV.

HIS position regarding Kit was one that gave Constance Marlowe much food for thought. In fact, it was so pressing as to disturb her sleep and upset her appetite.

"Why must she choose to be with a woman who is not only a great friend but a relative of the one man she must not meet?" that was Constance's impatient query all the time. It was so annoying. Nothing could have been better than for the girl to have gone down into the country if only she had gone with anyone except the old lady with whom she was, Constance thought very deeply, while she brushed her soft brown hair the morning after that dinner at the Leiths'. There was much that was pleasant to ponder over. She had certainly done a very good thing in having arranged to be Sybil's bridesmaid, and Sir Philip had expressed the most charming interest in this fact. He had seemed very glad to see her too, and they had sat for quite half-an-hour in the conservatory chatting together. All this was delightful, also the fact that he had offered his services to see her safely home, and had driven in a hansom with her up to her friend's house.

Yes, this was all very nice and very satisfactory, but it made the question of Kit only the more difficult, for Sir Philip had by no means forgotten the "red-haired little witch," whom he had chanced to see that bygone morning, and he had asked a good many questions concerning this same little witch's welfare at school, and of her progress there altogether.

"And I suppose she will be coming out into the world next year?" he had said, "very probably."

She parted and brushed back her soft, pretty hair in the Madonna fashion in which she always wore it, and she looked at herself in a cold, calculating sort of way, as she stood before her mirror.

There was no denying her beauty—it was absolute. Few women could lay claim to such charms as she possessed, and yet it was bitter mortification to a nature like Constance's to have to acknowledge to herself she was not a success.

She had her admirers of course—in fact, every one always admired her; but in the several cases where she had desired most to attract, and she had given most thought and hope, Constance had always failed. Philip Desmond was not the first man whom she had wished to marry for position, or some other reason; but with none of the others had her hopes been so strong, her desire so keen, as with him. Each day the prospect of a future as his wife grew more and more desirable. She wanted to be married now; she was weary of her mother and of her life in general, and her ambitious mind pictured a series of social triumphs when as Lady Desmond, wife to one of the most distinguished and celebrated men of the day, she should take her high place in the world of fashion, rank, and wealth.

Her heart beat fast as she conjured it all up, and then she grew suddenly cold and faint as she remembered now by one mischance the whole magnificent future could be spoiled and lost to her for ever.

She felt assured that Philip Desmond would never even take her hand in friendship again could he know for a certainty that she had told him, not one, but a succession of deliberate falsehoods; and that, added to the circumstance of Kit's departure from the Leiths, did not, Constance was well aware, reflect to her best advantage. She had not troubled herself in the very least about what sort of

life the young girl would have to face; she had shown neither womanly interest or cousinly sympathy in the matter. It had suited her purposes to get Kit away safely and swiftly, and she had snatched at the first chance that suggested itself to her, without giving a thought to Kit's feelings in any way whatever.

No; the clearer these things came before Constance, the more certainly did she determine she must prevent the knowledge of them ever reaching Philip Desmond's ears, until at least she had secured for herself the future she so much desired. But how must she act? What do?

She sat a long time staring at herself in the glass, for once blind to her own reflection, lost in her confused and confusing thoughts.

She rose at last hurriedly.

She must go down to the country and see Kit. It was the best plan, and there was no time to be lost; it was already midday. As she drove to the station, Constance was busy concocting the story best likely to work her will, and get her cousin away from Lady Milborough. Somehow she felt she would not have an easy task. The tone of Kit's letter had been a revelation to her, showing her that there was a great deal more in the girl's character and nature than she had ever troubled herself to imagine could be possible.

What if Kit should refuse to consent to her proposal?

Constance set her small teeth, and clenched her hands. Having fixed her mind on working, at all hazards, a prevention of a meeting between Kit and Philip, she would not relinquish this easily. She was clever enough to know the best way to work with her cousin; she knew how the girl had always responded to affection. Soft words she was certain would win her all she required, and then she would only have to touch on Kit's gratitude, and the game was hers absolutely.

Lady Milborough's house was situated some distance from the country station, and Constance had to charter a fly to reach there. The beauties of the quaint old place were completely lost on her—she cared for none of them. She was longing, as she had never longed before, to see her cousin's form with the hair that was grown so objectionable to her, and the fathomless eyes which stirred her jealousy into being.

She alighted at the old-fashioned porch, a dainty vision in her smart summer gown, and asked in her sweetest way to be allowed to see Kate Lowe, who had just come to reside beneath Lady Milborough's roof. The butler—grey-haired in his well-loved mistress's service—gazed with much admiration at Miss Marlowe.

He answered that Miss Lowe was at present with her ladyship, who was unfortunately not very well, and was compelled to remain in her room. If the young lady would kindly come in and wait, he would send up and inform Miss Lowe a visitor wished to see her.

Constance followed him into the long low-roofed drawing-room, with its white-draped windows opening on the lawn, and its atmosphere scented with roses.

She was a little nervous and not at all comfortable. It was a strange feeling, but she felt all at once as though she were afraid of her interview with Kit.

She walked restlessly about the room looking at the pictures and curios scattered about in a concentrated fashion, yet seeing none of them, and then the door opened and Kit came in.

Was it Kit?

Constance was amazed into momentary silence by the girl's appearance. It was not

only the pretty pink cotton frock (one of several gowns that Sybil Leith had insisted on providing for her friend) that enhanced to a marvellous degree the exquisite tint of the clear pale skin and the masses of deep copper-red hair—it was the change in Kit's whole bearing, the lithe head borne as proudly as though she were a queen over a vast empire, the lips that were smileless, the eyes full of some subtle expression, which Constance could not understand in the very least, all spoke of a marked change.

They stood in silence for a moment, and then Constance laughed a little awkwardly.

"Well, Kit, are you not going to say you are glad to see me? I have come a long way to pay you this visit."

Kit came a little further forward into the room, and stood with one hand resting on a chair-back.

"It is very good of you," she said, gently. She paused a moment. "You want me to do something, Constance?" she asked, in the same tone, after that pause.

Constance Marlowe flushed hotly. What had come to Kit? The transformation in the girl was little short of marvellous. She felt more and more assured of the difficulty of the task before her, but she was none the less determined to carry it through.

Kit in this altered condition was something infinitely more dangerous than Constance cared to realise. Her jealousy leaped into a fiercer flame than before. She had hard work to control it. Her lips showed white and thin as she smiled.

"Must I necessarily want something because I have come to see you, Kit? You are not very kind, I must say."

Kit's lips quivered an instant, then grew firm.

"I am sorry if I seem unkind," she answered. "I do not mean to be so, Constance, but—"

Her pause was eloquent. It said as clearly as words, "But I do not quite understand why you, who have never taken the faintest trouble for or about me all this time, should all at once pay me a visit, which demands a long and tedious journey, unless you require something of me."

Constance completely comprehended that pause. She immediately lost her temper, and, in consequence changed her tactics. What use to annoy herself by acting a part which would have no effect? She threw herself into an easy chair and laughed shortly.

"I had not given you credit for so much discrimination," she said, coldly and quietly; "but as you have shown me you possess it in a well-developed degree, and I may as well be frank, you are right. I do want you to do something, and that is why I am here. I desire you to leave this place immediately, and return to London with me this afternoon!"

Kit started a little in surprise, and the colour flashed into her cheeks. She looked very beautiful in this moment. She did not speak immediately.

"You wish this—why?" she asked, when she did speak.

"I have very good reasons," Constance answered, shortly.

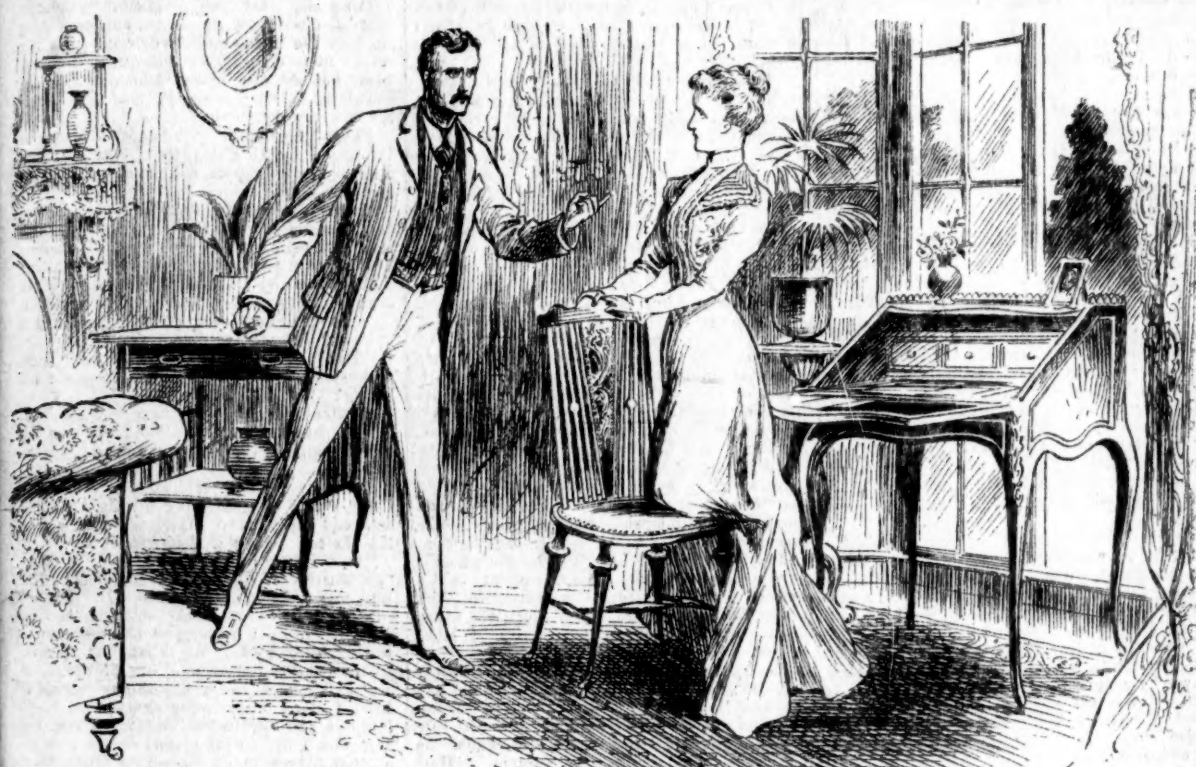
"I should like to hear them," Kit said, very quietly.

The cousins gazed at each other in silence for a moment. Constance measured swords with Kit in that glance, and at the realisation that her power over the girl was gone her jealousy and dislike, augmented by her fear of consequences, became definite hatred.

"I do not recognise your right to ask this," she said, haughtily, and with a touch of her mother's autocratic manner. "What I do recognise is my right to claim the result of the gratitude you expressed so fluently when you had need of my help the other day."

"You will not find me ungrateful, Constance."

Kit was very pale now.



MAURICE MONTGOMERY TELLS CONSTANCE A HOME TRUTH.

"Give me your reasons for asking me to do this thing, and if it be possible with my sense of duty and honour I will act as you desire."

Constance got up and walked about the room swiftly. She was very angry.

"I have no other reason to give you, except that it is my wish that you should leave this house. I don't know what sense of duty or honour can be clearer than that which is due to me, not only as the person who helped you in your hour of need, but as the daughter of my mother on whose bounty you have lived so many years."

Kit looked at her cousin full out of her magnificent eyes.

"You have chosen the wrong argument, Constance," she said in low, yet clear, tones. Her hand, resting on the oaken chair, trembled a little, and her heart beat fast and heavy under her pink bodice. She was pale to her very lips.

"To conjure by taunts of my long dependence is not likely to be successful. I do not need you to teach me where my duty and honour lies. I have never failed in either where you or your mother have been concerned. I am no longer a dependent. I live no longer on charity. For the bread I have received, the clothes I have worn, I have ever been grateful; but price is as great as gratitude, and I shall be able, please Heaven, to repay your mother every penny she has expended on me before many years have gone. For you, I realise how poor a thing your aid to me was. Had you not need of me now you would not remember I am even alive. I gave you, Constance, more love and sincere admiration in the past than you can possibly have known."

"I have loved you as though you were my sister. I have been so proud of you, I have believed in you!"

"I would not let myself think you were cold and hard; but facts are indisputable witnesses. You have yourself torn down the veil from my eyes and shown me what you really are."

"You are my kinswoman, but there is no affection in your heart for me. It will be better for us that we do not meet again, our paths in life are far apart, we can be free of one another, and it will be happier so."

Constance listened in the silence that betokens intense anger.

"You refuse—you refuse!" she said hotly. "You will not do what I ask!"

Kit was very quiet and firm.

"Give me your reason for asking this, and as I said just now, if it is possible, I will do what you want; but," her voice faltered, "I have received more kindness, more tenderness in the week I have been beneath this roof, than I have ever thought it possible I should know. Lady Milborough has need of me. Unless your reason is most powerful I cannot—I will not give her pain and disappointment by leaving her when I am likely to be a comfort to her. Surely," she smiled, faintly, "surely you must yourself see that what I ask is not only reasonable, but right. I am not a free agent now. I have accepted an engagement I must fulfil, unless some most urgent circumstances arise to prevent me. Tell me why you wish me to leave Lady Milborough in this sudden way, and—"

"You had no right to come here. You should have consulted me first. You were very well off where you were. It was disgraceful to have done what you did, to have wormed your way into Sybil Leith's most foolish generosity, and—"

Kit put out her hand.

"Stop!" she said quietly, imperiously. "Stop! You shall say no more to me! You have said already too much."

Constance's face, grown crimson in her hotly uttered speech, turned suddenly pale.

She stood silent an instant, and then moved slowly towards Kit. She was hardly sane in this moment—the absolute realisation that she had failed, and failed, too, chiefly through her

own bad management, infuriated her into another being.

In all the years Kit had known her cousin she had never seen her like this before. Even the delicate beauty seemed gone with that hard wild look in place of her ordinary gentleness. Constance seemed an old and almost plain woman.

Her lips moved but no words came, the vehemence of her anger paralysed her speech, and she stood there with Kit gazing at her in pain and sorrow mingled—a man's voice, sounding clear and hearty, came to their ears.

"All right, Mason, I'll have a cup of tea out here. It's cooler outside, and you can send up and tell her Ladyship I am here. Tell her not to hurry about seeing me for an hour or so as I have brought down my traps and shall stay the night."

The speaker came into view as he finished. He had passed through the old hall, and was emerged now on to the lawn just in front of the open windows.

As the sound of this voice came to Constance Marlow's ears she gave a great start; her breath came from her ashen lips in gasping sighs.

She stretched out her hand in a blind, helpless fashion, and as Kit started forward to seize it eagerly, and in much fear, Constance's anger, fear, and sudden horror slipped from her comprehension in a curious dream-like fashion. She staggered and fell against Kit's slender form; and as Philip Desmond turned, hastily startled by her sudden cry, he found her kneeling trembling on the ground bending over a huddled woman's form, whose white face looked almost deathlike in its rigid pallor.

CHAPTER. XV.

If Constance had planned out a series of the most dramatic and effective situations to assist her in the awkward moment she had been dreading so much, none of them could

have possibly been more successful than this rehearsed scene which put her at once into a position that not only demanded, but obtained, Philip Desmond's sincere sympathy and interest.

Kit's preternatural calmness deserted her as she saw her cousin's weakness; tears started to her lovely eyes, she was in great distress. Sir Philip's astonishment at seeing her was lost upon her, she could think of nothing but Constance; and her tender heart was full of remorse for having received her cousin so coldly.

She became the Kit of old in this moment, natural, unrestrained, letting the whole beauty of her true woman's nature have full vent. The evil influence brought by Maurice's cruelty was gone for the time.

Philip saw and took heed of everything. He was touched by her distress, and his ready aid won him a word of thanks and a glance from her beautiful troubled eyes.

Curbing his natural astonishment at coming so unexpectedly upon Miss Marlowe in a fainting condition under his kinswoman's roof, and upon the "little red-haired witch" whose face he had never been able to forget, Sir Philip proved himself a most skilful nurse and physician.

He lifted Constance with no very great difficulty, for he was very strong, and her weight was not great, from the ground to a couch, which he wheeled up to the window, to get some air; and he stood looking down at Kit as she knelt beside the couch, trying all in her power to restore consciousness to the pale, still face, with eyes that seemed as though drawn by magnetic power.

How lovely the child was—something more beautiful than he had ever yet seen in all his varied life. In a dreamy sort of way he seemed to feel no very great surprise at meeting her again, even though the meeting had come so unexpectedly.

It seemed to him now that she had always been in the gallery of his thoughts, most cherished pictures. It was almost natural to be gazing down on her, to watch her graceful movements, and realise her exquisitely young individuality.

He had rung for maids, and there was a flutter to and fro in the old room, and after a while Constance opened her eyes, staring in a dazed way at first, and then smiling faintly as she became fully conscious that it was Philip who was bending down to inquire how she was.

She looked very pretty and delicate as she lay back on the pillows and closed her eyes again.

She thought swiftly and strongly in that moment; she was quick to see that Fate had been kind to her.

Philip's concern and sympathy was legibly written on his face. There had been no time for questions, and Kit could have said nothing.

She must act swiftly, immediately; she must take Philip into her confidence, and invent some story to explain things.

"You are better," Sir Philip said as she opened her eyes again. "I am so glad; you looked very ill, and your cousin was so much alarmed."

Constance looked around.

"Where is Kit?" she inquired, her voice feeble and low. "I—"

Sir Philip explained that the girl had run upstairs to see Lady Milborough, who had heard something had happened, and was a little anxious and nervous, especially as she was not well enough to come down from her room.

"Oh! I am so sorry," Constance murmured; "I hope I have not made her ill. I don't often faint, I am usually so strong in my nerves, but to-day—" and then she paused effectively, and half raised herself. "Sir Philip," she said hurriedly, a tiny colour creeping into her pale cheeks, "I—I want to say a few words to you before Kit comes. I promised her I would

keep silence about everything, but—but I feel I must explain myself to you, or I am afraid to think what your opinion of me will be. I—"

"Dear Miss Marlowe," Philip said, simply and earnestly, and speaking the truth, "I assure that I am not in the least curious or anxious to know any secret. It has something to do with your little cousin being here with Lady Milborough, has it not? Well, please do not worry yourself. I am sure no explanation is necessary."

"Oh! but there is!" Constance held out her hand. "If you would help me to that chair outside, I should feel better. You are so kind, Sir Philip," she added as his strong hands almost lifted her through the window. "Now, please listen. I have only a few words to say in self-justification; they must be said, for I—I cannot allow myself to seem, even for an instant, a person who prevaricates, or—" She smiled as he interrupted her courteously, and then went on abruptly. "You thought that child in a school in Paris. So did I. Kit is an almost impossible nature—wild, unrestrained, but good to the core. Life with my mother was always trying to her; time after time she has threatened to run away, and be independent of everybody. She loves me, I believe, in her own strange fashion, and yet, you see, she has given me the greatest anxiety and sorrow, almost causing me a serious illness." Here Constance rose, and taking his arm, moved slowly down the lawn, getting well out of earshot in case of Kit's return.

She spun out her false story glibly—words came to her easily. She related how she had arranged for Kit to go to Paris to school, travelling up to town to be put into the safe hands of the mistress of the school, under the care of an old and faithful servant. How that, on arriving in London, they found the French governess was not there, and Kit had immediately declared her capability of making her way to Paris alone. How from that moment the wild scheme of cutting herself adrift from her relations seemed to have entered the girl's head, and how by a series of the most clever devices she had presented herself at Lady Grace Leith's house, passing herself off as a country girl whom she, Constance, had once recommended to Lady Grace as a maid, and so obtaining the situation.

"The rest I think you know," Constance said, sighing as she reached the end of her story. "How Sybil Leith, of course, saw that Kit was no ordinary servant, and how she obtained her this engagement with Lady Milborough."

Sir Philip had listened in grave silence.

"It seems a daring bit of madness for the little creature to have undertaken," he said, as she paused, and by the tone of his voice Constance knew he was not as yet convinced by her clever story. She answered him swiftly.

"You don't know Kit. She is capable of anything. The child has always been a source of great anxiety to me. I have never quite agreed with my mother over her education. Had I been allowed my way Kit should have had a very different childhood."

It was impossible not to be touched by the sound of regret and tenderness in Constance's voice. It was absolutely genuine.

"I know," she went on, "it sounds an almost impossible story, yet it has been possible, and you can imagine my horrible anxiety. Sir Philip, when this morning I received from Paris, in answer to a letter I wrote to the head of the pension, and making inquiries as to her progress, a communication informing me my cousin had never made her appearance there at all! How she managed to send me the two letters I have received I have not yet been able to elicit from her, but I imagine her chum, Chris Hornton, has been a conspirator with her, and must have helped her in this. I can account for it in no other way!"

Constance sank into a garden seat some little distance from the house, and sat looking up into the man's interested face. Her hair was a little dishevelled, and her dress crumpled, but she had never looked prettier, and her slight assumption of maternal anxiety over Kit sat very well upon her.

Philip Desmond could not fail to be impressed by this air, though at the same time he was conscious of a distinct disappointment.

There was an unmistakable atmosphere of deceit and intrigue in this account of Kit's strange conduct which destroyed the pleasure her beautiful young personality had given him, and swept away much of the illusion that had arisen unconsciously about her. It was this thought that made him break in now with a question, put a little abruptly.

"But," he said, quickly, "I don't quite understand the girl's motive. Was she not happy?"

Constance smiled sadly, and bent her head. "My mother is very strict; she has not much sympathy with young people," she answered, in a gentle way that excused Kit while it did not condemn her mother.

Sir Philip, remembering all Lady Sinclair had said about Mrs. Marlowe, at once gave Kit the full benefit of that excuse.

"It is a little romance in its way," he said; "fortunately it has ended well for Miss Kit. But how did you trace her here?"

"Through Sybil Leith"—Constance was delighted beyond measure at the easy way in which she had overcome what had appeared an insuperable difficulty—"her description of her protégée, all the pretty things she said of Kit. I don't know what exactly led me to jump to the conclusion that my truant was here, but I did so jump, and on the strength of that conviction I rushed off from town, having got the address from Sybil, and my haste and anxiety were well repaid, you see!"

Constance passed her hand over her brow, she was feeling weak and faint again, the reaction was setting in after so much intense mental excitement. She was very pale, and Sir Philip insisted on leading her slowly back to the house.

"You are not strong, I fear. I hope you will allow yourself to be persuaded to remain here until to-morrow. I am sure you ought to do so."

But Constance shook her head.

"Oh! my friends would be so alarmed, and now that I know the child is safe," and then she turned to him. "I have given her my word I will tell no one anything of her escapade. She is to remain Miss Lowe, the name she has adopted, and is to pursue her career of independence unmolested. She is afraid if Lady Milborough knew. You will say nothing to her, Sir Philip. I know I may trust you not to mention either to Kit or to anyone."

"You may trust me," he said, gravely. "My lips are sealed." He put her gently into the chair she had occupied before.

"You are so kind," Constance murmured, resting her head against the cushions.

Sir Philip looked at her a moment.

"If you insist on returning to town to-night, Miss Marlowe, I must be equally determined, and return with you, to see that you arrive in safety. Oh, yes, indeed I must. I cannot let you travel alone. I will just have five minutes' chat with my cousin. I ran down to-day because I heard she was not very well, and I am very much attached to her. I suppose I must have missed you at Paddington, and I got out at the station before— naming the one at which Constance had alighted, "as I wanted to have a rough survey of some of the land, otherwise we should have arrived together. Here comes your truant. I will leave you together. Poor child! she looks dreadfully worried about you."

He stood on one side to let Kit come through the window. Somehow all his disapproval melted away as he saw her.

There was a dignity and subdued air about her that had little kinship with the tale of wild recklessness which he had just heard; yet he did not doubt the story. It would, indeed, have been hard to doubt anything Constance said.

He went upstairs, nevertheless, with his brow knit, and had a little chat with Lady Milborough; she was not unnaturally curious and interested in the lady who had called to see Kate, and who had suffered such a severe fainting fit.

"I think her visit has upset the child, though she says nothing. It is someone from her home, is it not, Philip? I hope it is not a summons to take her away from me!"

"You like her, then?" Sir Philip asked, feeling a large degree of pleasure in hearing his kinswoman speak in this way.

"She is adorable!" Lady Milborough said, quickly. "She has every quality I admire, and is full of human nature. I am only afraid she will be too quiet here, and she does not want more depression. She needs the enjoyment and excitement of life that are the fitting accompaniments of her age. She is altogether too subdued and thoughtful!"

Sir Philip was astonished at this. Was the girl an enigma—subdued and thoughtful, when she had just carried through in so bold and dashing a manner, a scheme for her own independence? He held his tongue, however; he had promised Constance to be silent and secret; he would keep his word. But his interest in the "little witch" was already deepened three-fold, and he determined to follow her career carefully.

Lady Milborough's good word was a great credential; for she was a very shrewd woman, and one who rarely made any mistake in her judgment of people; but despite this and despite his honest admiration for her beauty and keen sympathy for the unhappiness of her former life which Constance had hinted at, Philip could not quite reconcile the thought of the deception Kit was supposed to have practised.

"Independence is a splendid thing; but it is not to be won by trick and deceit!" he thought to himself, then as he recalled Constance's words about Chris Hornton's share in the conspiring the posting of false letters, and he felt a pain and a sense of stronger disapproval than before.

"She begins badly, poor child!" he thought; "well, I can only hope she will be able to walk straight here. She is in a good home now and has a good chance. It will be her own fault if she fails!"

When he returned downstairs he found Constance veiled and gloved ready for him.

Kit was standing a little apart. Sir Philip could not quite see her face, for she was in a shadow; but he went up to her and held out his hand.

"Good-bye for to-day!" he said in his frank, pleasant voice. After all he would not judge her just yet; he would wait. "We shall meet often—you and I, and we must be good friends. I am always running down here to see Lady Milborough. You will take great care of her, I know!"

Kit said nothing; she only let her little hand rest in his. His voice was like music in her ears after those few curt words Constance had spoken when they were alone. Kit, full of remorse for a wrong, poor child! she had never committed, would have stretched out her hands and made some atonement; for she had been foud of Constance, and the heavy fainting fit had touched her tender womanly heart to its core; but Miss Marlowe drew back.

"Oh, please don't try to be hypocritical. You can't undo what you have done or unsay what you have said. You have behaved shamefully to me. Of course we shall have to meet now and then, I suppose, and despite your great independence you will no doubt find it useful to apply to me some time or other; but I shall never forget that you refused to grant

me the first favour I ever asked you. No, I shall not forget, and I shall not forgive either!" and then Constance had turned to a long mirror and had devoted her whole attention to arranging her toilet for her return journey.

Kit at these words had let her hand drop to her side, and all her warmth froze into her former cold quietness. She moved about the room rearranging it, and then she had stood still as Sir Philip came in.

The touch of his hand, the sound of his voice was suddenly beautiful to the poor unhappy young being who was tasting the first bitterness of life's cruelty and pain, and stood alone and defenceless in face of the struggle which to her saddened eyes stretched so wearily ahead of her. Philip Desmond struck a different note in the monotony of misery. She could scarcely have said why; but she felt at all once that in this man there would be neither deceit, treachery, nor disappointment. He was not handsome, as Maurice had been, nor was his voice gentle as Constance's could be. He was to her a middle-aged man, rather stern in expression with no great personal attributes to charm or fascinate the senses. Yet Kit's whole nature seemed to revive and respond to his mere touch, and a feeling of pleasure stole over her troubled mind as he spoke of friendship between them.

It must have been some strange prescience that made her understand even in this first moment of meeting what a treasure a friend like Philip Desmond could be to her or any living being.

CHAPTER XVI.

It can easily be imagined that Constance returned to town in a very different frame of mind to that in which she had left it. She had ample chance for improving her position in Philip Desmond's eyes, and she did not fail to take advantage of it.

She talked very gently, and very sweetly, and rather sadly, about Kit, as they travelled through the pretty country, and her whole manner was so charming that Philip's admiration for her deepened and strengthened considerably.

It was only when he was away from her, having escorted her to the door of the house where she was staying, and receiving a profusion of delicately-expressed thanks, that Desmond had the sort of feeling that there was something odd in the events of the afternoon just passed.

He had no definite ideas on the subject, only he was a very practical man, and he had little sympathy, as a rule, with such a story as Constance had given him, and was inclined to view all confidences as a trifle contemptible.

He did not see, moreover, on thinking things over, why there should be any further mystery in the matter. Kit had perhaps not behaved wisely, in a conventional sense, yet she had done nothing disgraceful. And now that she had asserted her independence, and had found a home for herself, the truth of her former proceedings might just as well be declared as not. In fact, to his mind, he thought it was only right and fair to Kit herself that this should be done.

The girl had evidently nothing in the world, after her beauty, but her connection with an honourable name and honourable family. No doubt, in her youth and ignorance, she set very little store on these; but Constance was older and wiser, and should have known better. Of course, it was her kindness of heart that had led her to humour the girl's whim, and give her promise that nothing should be said, and that the whole affair should rest where it was; but Philip could not help regretting this concession on Constance's part, and regarding it as ill-judged altogether.

One day, sooner or later, Kit's true status would be discovered. It was not likely that such beauty as hers could live long unnoticed, and then complications and misunderstandings might arise to a serious extent over what, if explained now, would, after all, only be what

it was—the escapade of a headstrong and self-willed girl.

No; on the whole, Philip Desmond was not satisfied about the matter, and he wished sincerely that Constance had not appealed to his confidence, for then he would have explained all to Lady Milborough, and, in his clever hands, the thing would have soon been settled. As it was, he found himself in a false position, and it was extremely annoying to him. He must say nothing to his kinswoman, and he must appear to know nothing to Kit; and to his honest, truth-loving nature this was well-nigh abhorrent. However, there was no help for it. He had given his word of honour, and, until Constance should release him, or Kit disclose her secret herself, he must abide by this.

The days that followed were full of satisfaction and growing delight to Constance. She met Philip Desmond constantly.

She was plunged into the business of the wedding, driving about with Lady Grace and Sybil, and taking far more interest in the costly trousseau than the little bride elect herself, and was altogether in her element.

Sybil Leith was, in truth, a trifle troubled and uneasy. She was not in the least a girl who gave way easily to anxiety or trouble, but she could not fail to see that Maurice was not just what he had been.

He was very, very sweet and kind, and never neglected any one of the attentions which, as her affianced husband, were not only his duty but his pleasure, but something was wrong.

Often, when they were walking or riding together, Sybil would gaze tenderly and intently at her handsome lover's face, and her heart would contract suddenly at the gloom and shadow resting on it. And then his manner was often short and constrained. She was endowed with a good deal of tact, however, and she never teased him with questions; but she pondered over the matter in her mind, and a little grey cloud of sadness crept over the brilliancy of her happiness.

She would never have thought of confiding her anxiety to her mother, or to Constance, or to any one of her other friends; but it seemed to her, one day, to be not only natural, but a distinct pleasure, to unburden her mind to Philip Desmond. He was Maurice's oldest and best friend, and the one person in the world who invited a confidence on this subject.

Consequently, Sybil spoke to Sir Philip. It was one afternoon about a week before her marriage. They were going down to see Lady Milborough, she and Philip, alone.

Maurice was to have gone with her, but at the last moment he had sent a little pencilled note saying he had a very bad headache, and would Sybil forgive him if he stayed quietly in his rooms for the afternoon and rested awhile?

Sybil's whole heart yearned over him. If she could only have gone to him and remained with him to minister to his poor head! That was her one thought. How little she guessed that when her letter, full of tender words, was delivered at Captain Montgomery's chambers, that young man was stretched full length at his ease in a picturesque garden in the northern part of London, smoking and laughing and chatting to the pretty owner of the garden, with whom he seemed to be, as he undoubtedly was, on terms of easy and affectionate familiarity.

He had had a fight with himself over this visit to Lady Milborough's, and common sense had conquered him. He was not in the mood to meet Kit, he did not want to be tantalised by seeing before him the living realisation of what he had lost.

The girl had become something to him that no living thing had ever been before. He felt at times that he could not live his life without her; that to have the knowledge of her beautiful young love whispered once in his ears would be a happiness and treasure worth any sacrifice in the world. But though his passion for her grew so great, though her loss had worked so strange a difference in him, Maurice could not overcome his nature.

Self was his god. Even if he were free, marriage with a penniless girl would be nothing short of madness and social destruction, to say nothing of discomfort; and he was well aware that Kit's love now could only be won in an honourable and manly fashion. So he fought down his inclination and let things go on unchecked. His vanity could not fail to be gratified by Sybil's devotion. He did not love her, but he did not object to her love; and he determined he would have a very pleasant life once he was master of herself and her fortune.

In the meanwhile he put no curb on his reckless ill-humour and selfish gratifications. His acute disappointment, his mortification over Kit, only served to develop his egoism still further. He lived only for himself, and he was not a man to sit down and suffer much discomfort if there were any means possible to dispel it.

His ordinary life, could it have been laid before Sybil, would have sent the blood rushing from her cheeks and stopped the beating of her heart. But Maurice, however reckless his manner might be, was plentifully endowed with common sense. He did not intend that Sybil should ever know more than he chose to tell her, and that would certainly be as little as possible.

An afternoon spent as he was now spending it, in the society of an old ultra-Bohemian friend, was a relief in a double sense; it helped him to forget Kit, and it came pleasantly easy after a series of hours spent in company with Sybil, who, of course, was charming in the sense of being so very much in love with him, but who was by no means a brilliant conversationalist, and who, alas! too often provoked a sigh of impatient weariness from the man she had chosen as her companion for life.

No disturbing voice of conscience troubled Maurice in moments like this; he had dispensed with a conscience long ago, if indeed he had ever been given one. His motto was pleasure and enjoyment for self, and if these things did not come to him in a straight path, well, he had no objection to a crooked one. Loyalty, honour and gratitude to the girl whom he was about to marry so soon never entered into his calculations. He considered he was very generous in renouncing a small part of his liberty for her sake, he did not think any woman could or should want more.

Marriage would make no difference to his nature and very little to his life, except that from Sybil he would be able to obtain those luxuries and comforts which were so necessary to him. And so it was that as Sybil was whirled down into the country on this long-promised visit to Lady Milborough, Maurice set himself to try and forget her existence for a few hours; and the regret that he should have felt, in having given her what he knew would not only be disappointment but anxiety and pain into the bargain, had no place in his thoughts at all.

Sybil was silent at first during her journey down, and then she felt she must speak.

"I am afraid," she said, trying to curb her quivering lips, and to keep the tears from her eyes, "I am afraid, Sir Philip, that Maurice is not very strong."

Philip looked round at her keenly. He had not been altogether satisfied himself of late about Maurice—nothing definite, only a vague feeling that he was by no means worthy of the love of this pure, sweet girl. The pathetic sound of her voice pained him.

"My dear child, what an idea!" and he laughed heartily. "Why, barring that weakness in his leg, I should call Maurice a giant of strength—a constitution like a lion."

"And yet," Sybil said, looking at him with anxious, questioning eyes, "and yet you know he suffers so much from his head. He has had three bad headaches this week. That does not look like giant strength, does it?"

Philip Desmond said "No," briefly, and he frowned suddenly. The uneasy consciousness of Maurice's unworthiness which persisted in forcing itself upon him at odd times came into his mind now. He felt his colour rise in his

cheeks, and for the first time a definite regret arose within him that this marriage should take place.

"Cruelty or neglect will go very hard with her," he thought as he looked at Sybil's gentle, saddened face. And then he set himself to work to cheer her, and he did so so effectually that he was soon rewarded by seeing a smile replace the tear, and a look of relief chase away the anxiety.

It was Sybil's first meeting with Kit since they had parted in town, and the two girls ran to greet one another with a pleasure that was as pretty as it was sincere.

They were soon wandering off into the shady corners of the garden, while Philip sat chatting with Lady Milborough and listening in a dreamy way to the last reports of Kit.

He had seen her three times since that day he had come upon her unexpectedly; and he was astonished himself at the interest with which he was watching her life, and the pleasure he derived from hearing her praise sung by Lady Milborough.

The old lady had nothing but sweet words for the girl, and declared she had rarely been so happy in her life as she was now that she had Kit to cheer her and illumine her old age with her young, fresh beauty.

"And she is beautiful, Philip," Lady Milborough said, nodding her head. "She is a princess in her own way. Ah! I suppose one of these days the prince will be coming along, and then—"

Philip knit his brows suddenly; the words jarred him somehow.

"Has Lena Sinclair written to you lately?" he said, changing the subject abruptly.

Lady Milborough answered him in the negative, and the conversation drifted on to more general grounds until the two girls came sauntering back.

Philip sat and let his eyes rest on that slender, graceful figure, in its soft gown of some thin black material, that made such a good foil for the magnificent colouring of the proud, lovely head.

A princess indeed! It seemed to him she grew more beautiful each time he saw her.

Kit smiled as she met his eyes. She liked him so much. She already knew his character by heart, from hearing Lady Milborough talk of him. His qualities, his goodness, his splendid nature were themes of which Lady Milborough never tired. And apart from this, Kit liked him for himself. He brought back some of her shattered illusions. There was an atmosphere of nobility and reliance about him which touched her instantly.

She was glad when he came down, only she wished that she might have been perfectly frank with him and told him all about herself. It hurt her to remember that with him, as with Sybil and Lady Milborough, she was playing a part. But her pride was great on this subject. Since Constance had tacitly denied all kinship with her she would not put out her hand towards it. And, after all, she was of very small account, her place in the world would be always a humble one; and though Sir Philip was so kind to her, that did not by any means signify that he would be sufficiently interested to know anything about her.

Philip rose at her smile, and went across to her, while Sybil took his chair beside Lady Milborough.

"Are you tired, or shall we have a little walk?" Philip asked, as he let his eyes rest lingeringly on her face.

"I think I am never tired—that is, I used not to be," Kit, laughing softly. "I could race anybody, any amount, and beat them. I always—"

She was going to say, "I always beat Chris," but she stopped herself suddenly.

"You have no hat and no sunshade. Are you not afraid of the sun?" was Philip's next question, as they moved slowly down the lawn.

He was looking at her fair, white cheeks

and throat, that showed so exquisitely above the loose black frill of her gown. It was so marvelously fair, it looked as though it were the leaf of some soft white flower.

"I love the sun!" Kit shook her head and then she laughed. "I will tell you a secret, Sir Philip. I have always put my head so much as I could in the sun, because I thought the heat might draw out the red, and—"

"And?"

"And instead of that it only makes it worse!"

"And you do not like red hair?"

She gave another little laugh, but it was not so merry as the former.

"I don't think I trouble about it very much," she answered, and she gave a little weary sigh.

Philip had heard that sigh once or twice before, and he had noticed the subdued and thoughtful air which Lady Milborough had remarked upon to him so often in speaking of the girl.

Certainly it accorded ill with her reputation as a burden and a wild uncertain creature. She puzzled him in these moments, but she charmed him only the more. Her face, when she smiled and a mischievous look danced in her eyes, made him think of a lovely child; but with that pathetic little sigh in her voice, and that sorrowful expression round her lips, she was no longer a child—she was a woman, and his heart thrilled as he realised this.

"No, I do not think you need let it trouble you very much," he said, softly.

Kit did not see the admiration conveyed in this; she was thinking deeply and sadly.

Sybil had given her some moments of pain. She understood why Maurice had feigned an excuse not to come, and, indeed, no one could have fathomed the agony she had gone through at the thought of meeting him again.

It was her pride that suffered, not her heart, at this thought, but it was her heart only that suffered as she conjured up the life that lay before Sybil. If she might only stretch out her hands and save the girl from the sorrow in store for her!

Philip broke the long silence.

"You are happy here?" he asked, gently, his mind busy speculating as to the meaning of her deep thought.

She looked round quickly.

"Oh! yes, yes!" she answered; "everyone is so good to me. I am at home here."

"My cousin is a sweet woman. You will grow to love her!"

"It will be an easy task!" Kit smiled, and stooped to bury her face in some roses. "We talk of you so often—every day," she said, trying to tear herself out of her troubled thoughts about Sybil. "Lady Milborough declares there is no one like you in the world!"

Sir Philip laughed almost shyly.

"I am almost sorry to hear that!" he said. "I am afraid you will get too good an opinion of me!"

She shook her head gently.

"No," she said, quietly; "I do not think so. Do not be afraid of that, Sir Philip!" His pulses quickened at the tone of her voice. "We are none of us faultless," he said, hurriedly.

"Oh! you have your faults. I can remember them all. You are too independent!" he counted on her small fingers. "You have a hasty temper. You will travel about the world, and you refuse to get a wife anywhere. These are your bad faults according to Lady Milborough!"

Philip Desmond had grown suddenly hot at her words. He looked at her keenly. She was smiling again now. Her eyes were the eyes of a child—innocent, translucent, bewitching in their innocence.

A wife! The word sent a thrill through his heart; the meaning of that word had never come to him until this moment. A wife! a creature to belong all to himself—something young, fair, exquisitely delicate and lovely—being to cherish in his heart, to cling to his strong hands, to transform the whole world to him.

He could not speak; he walked on mechanically, conscious of nothing but this bewildering thought that suddenly awakened a flood of joy and pleasure, incomprehensible and indescribable.

Kit grew nervous at his silence.

"I-I hope you will forgive my nonsense, Sir Philip!" she said, hastily, shyly. "I spoke without thinking. I ought not to have said this!"

He turned at her voice.

"Why not? we—we are friends, are we not—you and I?"

Kit looked up at him; something in his voice and manner touched her suddenly. It was strange, but it was also true, that there was a sound almost of entreaty in his voice.

"I think you are very good to let me be your friend. You are so great and high in the world, and I—"

She broke off with a little laugh, and bent once again over a rose-bush. Tears had blinded her eyes. She—what was she? A poor frail girl without home or kin, something to be tossed about on the wind of life and dashed under the cruel feet of such men as Maurice, to be trampled on and have the heart crushed out of her.

Philip Desmond looked at her in silence. The power of her beauty had never been greater on him than at this moment; she thrilled him through and through as she spoke. The half-broken tone of her last words was full of pathos. He caught the gleam of tears in her eyes as she lifted her head from the rose-bush.

His hands trembled in their strength; love burst into being within his every fibre. The interest, the admiration, the charm he had felt, gave way before the new and vivid emotion that came upon him.

By an effort that was almost pain he restrained his lips. The words that were so near them must not be spoken yet. He must wait while; he must not jeopardise the future.

She was so young—a child-woman; she would not understand in this moment. He must not startle her; he would woo her gently and tenderly; he would lead her towards him softly. She should grow to know him, she should learn to cling to him. And then—

He took one of her hands and bowed his head over it, kissing it reverently.

"You are my friend now and always, I hope," was all he said; and then they turned, and walked back to the house, the light of his new found joy illuminating his dark worn face with sudden youth and comeliness, and a shy colour stealing over Kit's pale cheeks, as she remembered the courtly grace and gentleness of the man beside her.

The burden of her trouble seemed to have slipped a little in the last few moments. She forgot what she had suffered, in remembering the pleasure Philip Desmond's words had given her. It was as though soft fairy fingers had come to touch her wound with healing balms, to lift her bruised soul from out the dust of despair, to shed sunlight once again into her aching heart—this thought of friendship with Philip Desmond. The world lost its grey in this moment, and, if it had not been for Sybil's face with the shadow on it, Kit could have forgotten that so base and bad a creature as Maurice Montgomery had ever existed in it.

CHAPTER XVII.

The day of Sybil Leith's wedding dawned hot and beautiful. Constance Marlowe, standing before her mirror in one of the many pretty old-fashioned rooms of Halstead Manor, Sir George Leith's country residence, smiled contentedly at the sunshine and at her reflection.

She was in truth in high good humour—things were going so well. There was at this moment absolutely nothing to worry her.

News from the Limes told her her mother had an old friend staying with her, a woman whom Constance cordially detested, but who was very dear to Mrs. Marlowe. News also from her home brought the intelligence that

Chris Horton had started with his uncle on a yachting trip that was to last far into the autumn, so she was safe from any attack there.

Kit had undoubtedly kept utter silence, and Philip Desmond had as undoubtedly forgotten all about that day of the fainting fit, and the story she had so cleverly imposed upon him. If he had not forgotten it, he evidently did not consider it of any great importance, for he never by any chance made mention of it, nor did Kit's name ever enter into their conversation.

Constance therefore felt quite at ease, and was inclined at times to ridicule herself for the intense anxiety she had caused herself about him before this time.

Her hopes were very high. There had come of late a distinct change over Philip Desmond. A subtle, not very definite change, and one that to less observant eyes would perhaps never have been noticed; but Constance saw it, and construed it entirely to her own satisfaction.

Sir Philip had grown very quiet and dreamy of late. There was a soft light in his keen eyes and a smile of tenderness lingering about his well-cut mouth.

Constance, watching him eagerly, felt her heart thrill at the change that came over his face. She not only desired marriage with him for all the worldly advantages accruing to her from that marriage; she desired his love, his reverence, his devotion. The depths and beauties of his mind and heart had struck a feeble chord in her own.

In these days Constance was less mean, less selfish, less cold and hard than she had ever been, although she was not generous or honest enough to let regret or remorse enter into her heart where Kit was concerned. In fact she managed to forget Kit; save when Sybil Leith made mention of her she had no occasion to remember her, and it was only now and then that Sybil spoke the girl's name.

The bridesmaids dresses had been chosen by Constance to suit her own beauty, of course, and she smiled contentedly as she pictured herself coming down the village church, after the ceremony, on the arm of Sir Philip Desmond, who was to act as best man to Captain Montgomery.

It would be a fore-runner of things to come, and, as everybody knew, weddings were the best things in the world to foster other weddings.

Constance was almost determined to settle her anxiety once and for all on this occasion; at least she would make good use of her opportunities.

There were to be sundry festivities at Halstead after the bride and bridegroom had departed, and Sir Philip would of course make one of the house party, till the end of the week at least.

So Constance dressed for the wedding in great good humour, and ran a vision of loveliness in her costume of blue and cream, to kiss the bride and assist, if she might, at the important toilet.

Wrapt up in her own dream, Constance had devoted little thought of late to anything or anyone else; but as she sped down the corridor to Sybil's room, she came suddenly upon Maurice, who was leaning looking out of a window, in a preoccupied way.

Constance would have passed on, for she never troubled to talk much to Maurice, but Captain Montgomery turned.

"Not dressed yet?" she said, with a cold smile, glancing rapidly over his morning costume.

"I am not a woman; I don't spend hours at my glass!" Maurice answered, somewhat rudely, and in genuine bad temper.

Constance frowned and bit her lip. She would have liked to have said something sharp in return, but tact and common sense held her silent.

"I am going to see if I can help Sybil," she said; and she was just moving on, when a servant came upon them, bearing an open basket full of the most glorious roses, large,

fresh, and dewy, that looked as if they were just freshly cut.

"These are your gift, of course?" Constance said, a touch of sarcasm in her voice, as having informed the servant she was just going to Miss Leith's room, she took the basket into her hands. She could not resist this sneer. She wanted him to know she understood him a little.

Maurice said nothing; he was looking at the railway label on the outside of the basket and at a card that lay on the top of the flowers. The writing on the card was big, quaint and clear. He could read it easily:—"With my remembrance, my love, and my prayers.—K."

His face flushed hotly. He could have seized the roses in his hands and crushed them to his lips. They seemed to bring the very presence of Kit with them—their fragrance, their beauty, was not more great than hers, and they seemed to carry a message in their hearts that spoke the secret of hers.

"They are not my gift," he said, sullenly.

Constance looked at him. Once again she was struck by the truth that there was something very wrong with Maurice.

"They are from Lady Milborough," she observed. "Sybil will be glad to have them."

She was moving away when Maurice called her back.

"Do you ever see that little red-haired cousin of yours, the one who is in school at Paris?" he asked her, abruptly. She changed colour and hesitated.

"Why do you ask?" was her query.

Maurice laughed shortly.

"Curiosity," he answered, "and something else. I want you to send her a message, that's all."

"A message!" Constance faced him in her astonishment, and almost let the roses fall from her hold. "A message; but you don't know her?"

"You have a bad memory, Miss Marlowe," Captain Montgomery said, coolly; "but if you have forgotten the charity your cousin bestowed on me one day not so long ago, I am not so forgetful."

Constance said nothing at once. Her brows were drawn a little, and her mouth had an odd expression.

"It is not often one meets with a man who remembers to be grateful as long as you do," she said, when she spoke, and a faint, a very faint suspicion of something like the truth began to dawn on her mind all at once. "Kit will be honoured. Of course, I will give her your message. I shall be writing in a day or two. What do you wish me to say?"

Maurice paused. He felt he had gone too far, and yet such was the sullen recklessness within him that he went still farther.

"Tell her," he said, as he lounged against the open window; "tell her that I am still grateful to her for all she did that day, and that the pleasant chat we had will never be quite forgotten by me." He pushed himself on to his feet, and turned away. As he was about to stride down the passage he looked back at Constance. "Tell her also," he said, defiantly, indifferent to the expression on her face or to the probable consequences of his rash speech, "that I have found out she was right. Life can be full of dreams: one or two good, perhaps, but all the rest bad."

He swung himself down the corridor, and was lost to sight ere Constance had half recovered from her supreme surprise.

In an instant she had grasped the situation, and it seemed to make her heart stand still—the difference in Maurice, the strange incomprehensible change she had seen in Kit. She understood both at once.

She stood looking down the passage for the moment, startled out of knowing what to do next. Then she turned as a door opened, and, with a constrained laugh, went forward to greet the bride as she appeared in the doorway.

She laughed and chatted and seemed full of good spirits, so much so that Sybil lost her nervousness for the moment and smiled in sympathy.

But all the while Constance was thinking—thinking deeply, and feeling a thrill of intense satisfaction mingled with contempt.

"He is a fool!" she said to herself. And, indeed, Maurice had acted with a strange neglect of his usual prudence. Perhaps, if he could have known the after-result of his recklessness—evil, selfish, and heartless as he was, he would have hesitated before he had put so powerful a weapon into the hands of a woman who disliked him and hated her cousin.

(To be continued next week.)

This story commenced in No. 2,079. Back numbers can be obtained through all News-agents.

FOR INTENDING EMIGRANTS

The April circulars of the Emigrants' Information Office (31, Broadway, Westminster, S.W.) and the annual editions of the penny handbooks show the present prospects of emigration. A new pamphlet with map has been issued on the Orange River Colony.

This is the best season of the year for emigration to Canada, and there is an excellent demand for almost any kind of labour all over the Dominion. Emigrants should prepare to start at once. There is a very large demand for farm hands, especially in Ontario and the North West, and any able-bodied farm labourer or young man wishing to learn farming will have no difficulty in finding a place. At Sydney, in Nova Scotia, there is a good demand in the steel and iron works, and in the coal mines for general labourers, machinists, machinists' helpers and coal miners, especially those who can operate coal-cutting machines. Both in Nova Scotia and Ontario men, skilled and unskilled, are wanted for sanitary earthenware works and brickyards. The building trades are busy in all parts, and carpenters, bricklayers, plasterers, and others are wanted. At Winnipeg, in Manitoba, there is also a demand for a number of harness makers. The metal trades are very busy in Ontario. In the Province of Quebec and in Ontario lumbermen have been very busy. In the Algoma district of Ontario good farmers are stated to be in great demand. In British Columbia the metal and building trades are fairly busy; coal miners have been very slack at Nanaimo, and experienced men only can generally find work in East Kootenay, but recently there has been a strike of miners. The lumbering trade has been very busy. Many clerks are out of work. There is a brisk demand in all parts of Canada for female servants both in towns and on farms.

In Cape Colony there is a demand for wheelwrights, bodymakers, coachsmiths, trimmers, plasterers, bricklayers, carpenters, and first-class painters. There is no demand whatever for tailors unless they are first-class hands. There is no demand for miners, fitters, general labourers, or farm labourers. There is a good demand for female servants, but they should not go alone. Employers domiciled in the Colony can obtain cheap passages at £3 a head for male or female servants engaged by them here. There is some demand for female teachers, but the pay is not good. The cost of living is high.

In Natal there has been a good demand for certain classes of men on the railways, but these have now been sent out by the Agent-General, and no more are wanted. A good deal of work is going on in the building and other trades, but the local supply of labour is generally sufficient, though specially skilled men, if they land with a little money, should be able to procure work without difficulty. Wages are high, but the cost of living is high also. There is no demand for miners or farm labourers. There has been a strike of bricklayers at Durban.

Permits are still required by those proceeding to the Transvaal and Orange River Colony. They are not issued in this country, but must be applied for at the Permit

Office at the port in South Africa, at which the emigrant lands. Application forms may be obtained at the Emigrants' Information Office, and elsewhere. In the building trades at Johannesburg materials are coming up from the coast somewhat more quickly, and consequently men in those trades have been better employed, but a good many are still out of work. Harness makers and saddlers, and men in the furniture and wagon and carriage trades have been slack; shop and office fitters have been well employed. Printers have been in good demand both in Johannesburg and Pretoria, and the strike of men at Pretoria is now settled. The supply of unskilled labourers in all trades is more than enough. It must be remembered that prices of nearly everything remain very high, rent being especially high, and lodging sometimes almost unobtainable, and that the cost of living generally is two or three times as high as it is in this country. There is a demand for female servants, but they should not go alone. Female emigrants have very great difficulty in finding suitable lodgings. The Women's Immigration Department, 29, Plein Street, Johannesburg, has lately arranged a scheme subsidised by the local government by which domestic servants in England may have passages advanced to them on condition of their repaying £12 of the expenses out of their wages, at the rate of £1 a month, to the Women's Immigration Department. They must sign an agreement to this effect before leaving England. Application should be made to the South African Expansion Committee, 47, Victoria Street, London, S.W. Such emigrants go out under the protection of a matron, and are received into a hostel at De Villiers Street, Johannesburg, which is under the control of the department. It is hoped to send parties of fifty girls every fortnight.

In the Orange River Colony there is a fluctuating demand for good carpenters, masons, fitters, and painters, and for female servants, but the latter should not go alone. The cost of living is very high. Permits are necessary (see above).

APHORISMS

Cherish your enemies. You may need them as an antidote to your friends.

The man who says he has never told a lie has just added another to the list.

There is nothing perfect in this world—not even a perfect failure.

The things you buy for "next to nothing" are generally worth it.

A truism is a truth so true that it makes you feel tired to hear it.

How many of us good Christians cherish the secret hope that when we get to Heaven we won't meet there some of the people we used to know on earth?

A matrimonial paradox—Two become one, yet the population increases.

New rendering—the classes and the asses. It often happens that the richer a man becomes the less he is worth.

The greatest foe of liberty is not the tyrant, but the contented slave.

Honour women, for only from honoured women can free men spring.

What we know as history is mostly prejudice in a retrospective mood.

The type of the miser for all time was the dying man who blew out the candle, saying he could see to die in the dark.

It is very seldom that one finds a just appreciation of self stated with such simplicity as by a young man, who was giving an account of his travels. "Yes, indeed, Miss Clara," said he, "I have been in great peril, don't you know. One time, on a railway train out West, don't you know, we were stopped by the train robbers, don't you know, and one fellow, a terrible brigand he was, you know; he put his pistol to my head, and he said, 'Your money or your brains!' and then me soul, Miss Clara, I had nothing for him!"

A Remarkable Letter

THE LADY TYPIST AND BILE BEANS

The following letter, written by a London lady typist to the proprietors of Chas. Forde's Bile Beans, will interest many of our readers. It shows how effective Bile Beans are in cases of headache, dizziness, morning sickness, and general debility:—

38, Moncrieff Street,
Peckham, S.E.

Gentlemen,—It gives me much pleasure to send you an account of the benefits I have derived from Chas. Forde's Bile Beans.

Three years ago I was engaged as a lady clerk in the office of a city firm, and had to be at my work by 8.30 every morning. This meant having to catch an early train to the City in all weathers, sitting in a stuffy office all day, taking food irregularly, and reaching home again late every evening to such comforts as one can get in lodgings.

One morning I awoke with a violent headache, a thing almost unknown to me previously, but I found it had come to stay! For the next three months it scarcely ceased! Then there came a nasty sickness in the morning, followed by dizziness, and, occasionally, fainting during the day. I attended the Woman's Hospital for months, after having advice from three doctors. Yet, though at first I benefited by the treatment, I soon went from bad to worse again. My friends told me I looked like death, and I think I gave up all hope, for I was almost a skeleton, and the pain in my side, due, no doubt, to liver complaint, was like knives going through me!

After trying everything I could get, and doctor's medicine and hospital treatment so long, with so poor result, I adopted a friend's advice—gave up everything else, and tried what Bile Beans could do for me.

They did wonders! Before the third box was finished I was like a new woman. In two months they cured me, whereas doctors had failed to do so in two years. I am writing this letter almost a year after my cure, and during that time I have had no recurrence of my old symptoms. So there is no question as to the permanency of my cure.

Yours truly,

(Signed) A. CAMPBELL.

The same Bile Beans as did so much for Miss Campbell may be applied to your case. They are obtainable from all chemists at 1s. 11d. or 2s. 9d. per box. Many people are of the opinion that Bile Beans are an ordinary medicine. They are not. They are the product of the latest scientific research, and have been obtainable only within the last few years. They do not merely purge and give temporary relief, like the old-fashioned remedies of forty or fifty years ago. They act directly on the liver and digestive organs, strengthening and stimulating them to do their own work, so that further medicine-taking becomes unnecessary. They are purely vegetable. They contain no harmful drugs, and they are the finest family medicine obtainable.

"AS ONE WHOM HIS MOTHER HATH COMFORTED"

Dear, my mother, I'm alone,
No one heeds my cry or moan;
Dost God know that thou art dead?
Could not I have died instead?

Sweet, my child, I hear thy cry;
God willed not that thou should'st die;
But thy moans disturb my rest—
I will hush them on my breast.

Round him twined caressing arms,
Safe he dwelt, secure from harms;
Long the years he wandered through,
But her love alone he knew.

Pitying strangers touched his head—
"Life is strong, but mind is dead."
But the angels smiled and said,
"By his mother comforted."

JUDITH

CHAPTER XXXIII.—(Continued).

JUDITH read the letter to the end, then crushed it deliberately in her hand, feeling no anger, only a sort of hopeless disgust with her fate as it was then.

Notwithstanding the kindly feeling therein expressed, nothing had caused her such keen pain since Winifred's death as this well-meant offer of help. So clearly was it shown to her that the writer had believed all he had heard, and only attempted to stand by her still from a sense of loyalty—a feeling that, having loved once, he could not desert her in this dire necessity.

She tried to reason on the subject calmly, to plead on his behalf, that he was no longer young, and had learnt to distrust first impressions and outward appearances, having probably been often deceived by them, and been taught, by bitter experience, that the evil is a more likely solution of any problem than the good.

A man at his period of life—so she had read and been told—was more likely to think the worst of women than the best.

His first illusions, the dreams of boyhood, fading gradually or dispelled by some sharp shock, his mind would naturally incline to the other extreme, and this stage would probably last longer than the first, there being so much to strengthen him in his unbelief in the society in which at present he was thrown.

By-and-by it would be different again. He would marry a nice wife or gain some sweet, pre-meditated woman as his friend, in either of which cases he would revert to his first opinions. The strong bias of a good man always has to believe every woman better than himself.

So she told herself, trying to soothe her strong excitement, but without any very great success.

The more she considered the matter the fiercer became her resentment against the author of all this mischief—the man who, professing to love her, had worked her all this harm, with the intention of driving her to extremities, so that she might not be able to reject his suit.

Hitherto she had contented herself with remaining on the defensive, meeting his repeated attacks with a quiet, if scornful, defiance. Now, for the first time, she began to think of reprisals, of fighting for her own sake, for her own good name as well as her father's, and of the fortune of which he had been robbed.

To do this she must carry the war into the enemy's country, and though realising her own powerlessness, standing as she did alone, with the hand of every man against her, she yet remained determined and undaunted.

Plenty of spirit she had always possessed; it had only required rousing, having been paralysed for the time by the string of misfortunes which had beset her; but Lea-Creagh's letter had given her the required stimulus, and for this she was grateful, though it did violence to her pride to answer it in a friendly spirit, as she ultimately determined to do, in pursuance of her plans.

Her note was very brief and to the purpose.

"Dear Colonel Lea-Creagh.—Many thanks for your kind offer, of which I am glad to avail myself. I, too, have reason to believe that the robbery was a planned thing, and that though the actual thief was the ayah who used to wait on Miss Sherstone and on me, the prime mover in the matter was Mr. Johnson. If you can prove that it was so, I shall be very grateful indeed.—Yours truly,

"JUDITH HOLT."

Of his wish to lend her money she took no notice; though she could ignore it then, she could never forgive him the fact that he had

thought her capable of all those acts of which she had been accused. Whenever she thought of it she clenched her small white hands; and had Johnson seen her compressed lips, the ominous glitter in her blue eyes as she folded and despatched her letter, he would, perhaps, have acknowledged her a formidable enemy, and even then withdrawn from the contest. But though he thought of her often he never thought of her so. Always in his visions he saw her crushed and hopeless, clinging to him for help, he her saviour, all others having failed her in her need.

Though he had seen her at her proudest, when self-reliance was natural to her, and she had not feared the malice of any man, nor envy of her own sex, he would scarcely have recognised her then, nor realised that the woman he had known—soft and womanly always, in spite of her splendid physique, and a dignity that was innate—was one and the same with this other, who, with the mien of an offended goddess, stood erect, alone, breathing vows of vengeance, resolute to succeed in her enterprise, though in so doing she trampled every feminine tradition, all gentleness and delicacy of feeling under foot. It was he who had made her desperate. He must, she said to herself, looking very white, very determined, and terribly stern as she said it, be prepared to reap the consequences of his own acts.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

It was a very different Judith who took her seat at the breakfast-table next morning. It had been her custom lately to take her meals in her own room, and so avoid the unpleasantness with which she would otherwise have been subjected, and as she came in Mrs. Scott-Courtney drew herself up frigidly, and the civilian's young and not very wise wife blushed crimson as if she had herself been detected in an impropriety, while the young men who were present exchanged glances and seemed inclined to laugh.

Judith, no longer a girl over-weighted by a cruel, because unmerited, burden of shame, but a woman, resolute to resist her destiny and shape it to her own ends, remained quite cool and unembarrassed, only a hard look in her eyes betraying she had noticed and resented her reception.

She bore herself so bravely and with such quiet dignity that the women, who both watched her narrowly, beginning to doubt if they had been wise to condemn her outright, were visibly impressed; and when she left the table Mrs. Scott-Courtney made room for her with a half bow.

Though the victory was a slight one, yet it was accepted as a good omen, and Judith started her self-imposed labours with new vigour.

Her first step was to draw out a statement on paper, in which all her reasons were given for believing Johnson to be an alias for Michael Straughan, the absconding clerk, and, again, for Mr. Collett, a criminal on a larger and more ambitious scale; and this she did in a most business-like fashion.

In the meantime she had written to the Commissioner for the pen-and-ink likeness she had given into his charge, and his reply was a serious check to the game she meant to play.

"Sir Julius Sherston much regrets," he wrote, "that the sketch to which Miss Holt refers in her note has been either mislaid or lost. Should it be subsequently found, Sir Julius Sherston will lose no time in forwarding it to Miss Holt's address."

This however, instead of daunting her, proved a spur to her courage, rendering her the more determined to win, in spite of the heavy odds against her.

Woman's wit could avail her little here; all delicate weapons, such as it would be natural she should use, would be foiled at once by a

dogged effrontery they could scarcely hope to pierce.

Some heavier force was required to storm such a solid resistance; not unaided could she expect to gain the end she had in view.

If she could only learn the name of some respectable solicitor, she might put the case in his hands and depend upon his wider experience.

Consulting Mrs. Long on the subject she was informed by her, that Mr. De Souza was well thought of as a young pleader of some influence (a pleader, she explained, being the Anglo-Indian equivalent for a lawyer), and, moreover, as he had still his way to make in his profession he might be willing to undertake her case on the understanding he should pay himself out of the damages he gained.

This reminded Judith how terribly she was hampered by the want of money, and the proposition seemed such an easy method of solving the difficulty, that she decided at once to do as advised.

Determined also to lose no time, she at once put on her hat and walked over to the office, where she was told she would certainly find the lawyer at that hour.

It was not very far, but being the middle of the day the heat was intense, and the road so dusty and shadeless, that in the thick black gown she wore out of reverence to Winifred's memory, Judith soon grew very exhausted, and was glad to reach her destination.

By a Bengalee baboo of pompous, if not very cleanly, appearance, she was ushered into Mr. De Souza's presence, and was rather aghast to find the subordinate not much darker in complexion than his superior.

She had been long enough in the country to understand the different grades of colour, and to unhesitatingly put down the slight tall man who rose to meet her as being at least twelve annas in the rupee—to borrow an expression she had once heard used by Mrs. Trevor, whose horror of such people was intense and characteristic!

It was, however, too late to retreat, and, with a little grave bow, she accepted the chair he offered, and told him on what understanding she had come to him, and for what purpose.

"I am absolutely without money at present," she admitted, frankly; "but if I can prove the identity of the man who robbed my father you should not regret having helped me."

"You have been rightly informed so far," he answered her. "I have on several occasions undertaken cases where payment was dependent on my success; but, needless to say, I have only agreed to these terms when I thought the chances of victory reduced to something like a certainty."

Judith remained silent, a little disconcerted by the businesslike air with which he regarded the situation.

All women, and particularly those to whom nature has given some special grace of face or form, or what is perhaps more ardently to be desired, of manner, are in a measure inclined to take somewhat for granted the services men are indeed generally very glad to render. And Judith, being one of those who without an effort charmed, may be forgiven if she had fallen unconsciously into what she was quick enough to see was in this instance a mistake.

The man to whom she had applied was perhaps the last one in the world who would be weak enough to engage on a labour of chivalry.

"May I ask to whom I have the honour of speaking?" he questioned, politely, but with intense curiosity in his gaze.

"My name is Miss Holt."

She was a little startled to see how at her words the expression of his face altered in a moment.

His full brown eyes—which, after the manner of even semi-Oriental orbs, seemed to swim in moisture—rested on her still admiringly, but the diffidence that had also been noticeable in his manner disappeared as though by magic.

Though the circle in which the Commissioner moved was not the one in which he himself was best known, he had not failed to hear the scandal connected with the dismissal of their pretty governess, nor was he by any means averse to hearing the other side of the story.

He drew his chair a shade closer, and asked her, with rather a jaunty air:—

"How he could oblige Miss Holt?"

Understanding perfectly the reason of the change in his demeanour, Judith felt that she could not afford to resent it, and with heightened colour told him, in the fewest possible words, the facts of the matter, handing him, in conclusion, the paper on which she had written it all out plainly, lest she should have forgotten to demonstrate any important point.

His professional instincts fully aroused, he studied it intently, his face growing graver as he proceeded, pausing every now and then in his perusal to have a sentence explained, while Judith watched him anxiously.

"Well, what is your opinion?" she asked, as at last he laid the document on the table beside him, not relinquishing his hold upon it, though evidently having grasped all that it contained.

"You must let me reserve that until you have answered a few questions. Now, to keep to one subject at a time, choosing that with which you are naturally most concerned, tell me—How long is it since Mr. Collett made off with your father's property and papers?"

"About ten months ago."

"And when did you meet him again?"

"Directly after my arrival here—three or four months later."

"I suppose I may infer that detectives had been at once put upon his track? How was it that you were more successful than they? Had they no idea of his whereabouts?"

"My father wrote that they had traced him to India, but no further."

"Ah!" with a deep-drawn breath, as though of intelligence. "And was it after this information or before it that you recognised, or thought you recognised, the runaway in Mr. Johnson?"

"It was afterwards," she confessed a little reluctantly, seeing the drift of his remarks.

"Then I must presume he had disguised himself very completely to have eluded your suspicions so long?"

"I don't know. I never saw him in England; but I believe his hair used to be grey."

"You never saw him?" he repeated after her, blankly. "Then, my dear young lady, how on earth—"

"It was his voice I knew again, an expression I heard him use as he passed out of my father's house one day, I being out of sight at the time."

"And it was after your father's information, not before, that you recognised his voice as the same you had heard once?"

"Yes," she assented again, shamefacedly.

"And you have no photograph of him?"

"I had a sketch sent to me of Mr. Collett that exactly resembled Mr. Johnson in every detail."

"And you have brought that with you?" leaning forward eagerly, as he began to consider that there might be something in her story.

"It is lost, or rather I gave it into Sir Julius Sherston's keeping, and he says that he has lost it."

"A statement that you apparently do not believe. May I ask what motive you think he might have in suppressing it?"

"He has a motive, but what it is I do not exactly know, only that it must be connected with the time when Mr. Johnson, a clerk, then in his office, was known as Michael Straughan. He must possess some strong hold upon him, or surely he would never for an instant have countenanced an engagement between his daughter and a former subordinate."

The pleader's eyes gleamed, and he passed

his hand rapidly across his mouth to conceal the satisfaction he felt.

There is no doubt that men often take delight in the misfortunes of a friend, and if so, how much more in the threatened disgrace of anyone who has always held aloof, disdaining even to dislike those they would regard it too much condescension to notice?

Again and again Mr. de Souza had attempted to cross the social gulf that divided him from the Commissioner, and had only been met by a coolness that arose as much from indifference as scorn of his pretensions.

Once he had even managed to gain an introduction to Lady Sherston, and on the strength of this had called; but no notice was taken of his visit, and when subsequently he encountered her in the street, she looked either above or beyond, certainly not at him. Now it seemed a chance had come to repay the insults which had rankled more than any absolute injury, and it was with ill-suppressed eagerness in his tones that he asked quickly, "And you have proofs of what you say? These are not mere surmises?"

"It is all quite true. Two or three know him to be the same man."—She stopped short, remembering that not one of those would testify to what they knew.

Colonel Lea-Creagh had always been honestly doubtful on the subject; Mrs. Trevor had flatly denied any knowledge if she had had any; while Gerald Sherston had vowed by Wimpfred's grave that he would not interfere again one way or the other.

Certainly it was not likely that the Commissioner himself would speak.

"Well?" ejaculated the pleader, impatiently.

"It is no good. Not one of them will say what they know!" she returned, hopelessly.

"Then, my dear madam, your case has not a leg to stand on. It was ridiculous coming to me with a tale so unsupported. You are probably yourself mistaken."

"Mistaken! Why, he admitted it all to me himself!" with smothered indignation.

"When alone with you, of course?" satirically.

Her silence showed that he had guessed rightly, and after watching her downcast face for a few moments with no sympathy, yet still most fervent admiration in his gaze, he went on with deliberate emphasis:

"You must be aware that such a confession, unattested by any witnesses, resting entirely on your own word, must be perfectly valueless from a legal point of view; for all that you affirm you do not possess one vestige of proof. There is nothing to show that the whole thing might not be a fabrication, or we will say an hallucination, an invention of your own brain!"

"I must apologise for trespassing on your time!" said Judith, stiffly, and rose from her seat.

But he stopped her with a gesture.

"Pardon me if, in endeavouring to prove to you beyond a doubt that any action in this matter would be useless, I have spoken too plainly. I did not mean to offend you, only to make clear what impression your story might make on the minds of most people who heard it!"

"It does not matter!" said Judith, drearily.

"One moment. In saying this I do not by any means wish to infer that I can be of no use to you at all; on the contrary, I think, with my help, you might become the mistress of a considerable sum of money."

"Hush-money I suppose you mean? It is scarcely likely, however, if my story is so utterly unworthy of credit, that they would pay me to keep silent, nor would I accept such a compromise for an instant!"

"I see you don't quite follow me. A little patience, and I will explain. I am not unacquainted with the circumstances of your departure from Sir Julius Sherston's roof. I have myself heard the scandals circulated, and believe they could easily be traced to Lady Sherston, and put down to personal

malice. I am confident that if there were no witnesses to that meeting with Mr. Johnson, nor any actual proof of an understanding between yourself and old Sir Julius, you might easily obtain a verdict in an action for libel, and heavy damages besides."

Judith's eyes, which at first were all ablaze with scorn, became fixed in an expression of horror as she realised the extent of his offer. Even her limbs seemed to become lifeless, and it was with difficulty she reached the door, giving Mr. de Souza time to remark as he opened it,—

"Remember, I am not saying that I believe all the stories I have heard against you. Every man has a right to be considered innocent till he has been proved guilty; and much more a woman, when she is young and beautiful like yourself. Think it over, and come to me again, if you entertain my suggestion."

The hand which he had dared, in quasi-paternal fashion, to lay upon her shoulder, was shaken off so violently as almost to upset his balance; and, breathless in her anger, Judith confronted him in an attitude absolutely magnificent in its dignity and grace.

"How dare you, sir, interfere in my private concerns? How dare you propose such a thing to me?" she exclaimed, and then, from the very greatness of her wrath, could say no more.

He, too, was white with rage, more at the contempt expressed in her manner than in her words. His face assumed a diabolical look as he bent forward that his answer might carry further, and follow her as she went.

"No concerns of yours are very private, and I might have dared more where others have dared so much."

It was with this sentence ringing in her ears that Judith found herself in the road again, staggering along under a hot sun without an umbrella, the dust, raised by some passing bullock carts, enveloping her like a cloud.

She called out to them to move a little on one side, but the drivers only made a pretence of acceding to her request, and soon relinquished even that; and presently, almost blinded, Judith took to her heels and ran, distancing the long line of them at last, but quite exhausted, and trembling all over when she reached the hotel.

When she entered her own room it was a shock to find another trial to be met. Someone got up quickly from a chair near the window, and came forward to meet her.

It was Mr. Johnson; and for a moment she faced him speechless, while he, too, was mute, surveying her with a rather critical expression.

Standing so at the darkest end of the room, in her black garments, and with that dead pallor that is sometimes caused by intense heat, she looked almost plain; so weary was she, and so sad.

For a moment, the man who had never indulged his feelings, never allowed any sentiment to interfere with the one great desire of his life—social success—wondered whether she was worth the sacrifice he proposed to make for her sake; whether he might not one day regret that he had given up ambition, and not even gained love instead.

Was she so very lovely? he asked himself, and almost as though in answer to his unspoken question, she moved past him into the embrasure of the window, where he had been waiting for her for the last half-hour.

There the sunshine streamed down upon her head, bringing out all the rich tints of her soft, dark hair, showing up the brilliancy of her bright blue eyes; and, no longer hesitating, he went close up beside her.

"I have been waiting for you nearly an hour," he began, almost savagely.

"Why did you come?" divesting herself quietly of her hat, and drawing off her gloves. "Because I could not stay away. I am mad with love for you. I cannot live without you."

The scornful curve of her upper lip very plainly implied that the matter of his life or

death was something to which she was supremely indifferent. She would not even deign to speak.

"I have come again to-day," he went on, "to ask you to reconsider your decision. Give up this unequal struggle, for unequal it must always be, since poverty and beauty are two most dangerous ingredients in a woman's composition. Beauty cannot be hedged round with too many thorns, and you are quite defenceless."

"I have my father!"

"Pshaw! He has not even answered your telegram, urgently as it was worded. He has not the power to help you if he would. Life lately has been very hard for him to live. I have heard from a private source that he has been at times in actual want."

"You know all this. You can tell me so with no more feeling or remorse than if you were not responsible for all his misery and mine!"

He put her indignation airily aside, declining to discuss the question she had raised.

"I know, too, that you have been to seek legal advice, legal aid, to-day, and have utterly failed in obtaining any satisfaction. No; I have not been invoking any unseen powers—there has been no magic in the matter. Simply Mrs. Long informed me where you had gone, and your face as you came in betrayed with what result."

"I do not despair!" she interpolated, quickly.

"It was only to be foreseen. Success is impossible. Even though you will not acknowledge yourself beaten, you must admit the truth in your heart. Only by becoming my wife can you reinstate yourself in public opinion!"

Looking out of the window, she turned to cast on him a glance of utter disdain over her shoulder as she answered quietly,—

"I should have thought my last answer to that question was sufficiently explicit!"

"You need not despise an offer it required some generosity to make. Have any of your other admirers come forward?" he asked, tauntingly.

An impatient tapping of her foot on the ground showed that the remark had been heard—had left its sting.

"The story of our innocent embrace has increased so seriously in going its rounds that you would scarcely recognise it. I am not surprised that others hold aloof. Believe me, it is your best chance to become my wife!"

"I will never marry you!" she said, convincingly, so much so that his air of self-confidence and security vanished, and in its stead came a look of desperation, as he convulsively grasped her wrist.

"You do not mean that. You cannot mean it. You must marry me. What else can you do?" he ejaculated, savagely.

"I will never marry you!" she said again, and faced him boldly.

"Judith, think a moment. I am a bad man, I know, bad all through, but I love you with my whole soul, and to you I will be all that you could desire!"

Quietly but firmly she released herself and turned to go.

"You shall not leave me so!" he whispered, hoarsely. "You shall not, I say! Judith!"

But she was already gone, the skirt of her gown was whisked sharply through the door as it closed behind her. He was left alone to meditate over the futility of all scheming where women were concerned, since they can never be depended on in any crisis, and it is quite impossible to anticipate their actions.

What he had done might have been left undone for all the success he had obtained. It gave him very little satisfaction to remember he had acted partly in self-defence, since the only stakes he had cared to win were lost, and lost beyond all hope.

CHAPTER XXXV.

It was like a breath of fresh air, a gleam of blessed sunshine, after travelling through a dark and gloomy tunnel, when the next afternoon, as Judith was sitting alone in her room, depressed with a night and morning of intense distress, and hopeless almost to despair, Mrs. Trevor was ushered in, trim and smiling in the prettiest of cotton costumes, and a broad white hat that shaded her face, but could not quite hide the traces of violet powder, or some less innocuous preparation.

Judith met her with outstretched hands, and eyes aglow with pleasure.

"This is good of you to come and see me," she cried, gratefully.

Mrs. Trevor stood on tip-toe to administer a bird-like salute.

"My dear, I'd far rather you abused my head off than praised me when I don't deserve it. I ought to have come to you long ago."

"You have come now, and I am very glad."

"Even now," she admitted penitently, "I have not come entirely of my own accord. It was suggested to me by someone else."

"By whom?" asked Judith.

"It was Sir Julius who told me that you were alone, and, he thought, in need of help, but before that I had been thinking of you, wondering what you were doing, and meaning every day to go and see. Now I am here I feel a perfect brute not to have been before."

"Don't mind; if you knew how nice it is to see one friendly face at last."

"I am not the only one who has been, surely?"

A sad little nod of the head was the sole reply, Judith's heart being too full then for speech.

All the courage which had borne her through so many trying scenes evaporated at this first touch of sympathy, and presently she found herself sobbing like a child in Mrs. Trevor's arms, that lady crying too with a noble disregard of the havoc she was making of her careful get-up.

"Do you mean to say that wretch St. Quentin even never came?" she managed to ask by-and-by.

And then when she received a faint denial she burst into quite a storm of invectives against him.

"She had always known him to be a shallow, empty-headed fop, caring for no one but himself, as weak as water, and fickle, too, never knowing his own mind for an hour together. Handsome he was, of course, but in a womanish way that she considered worse than actual plainness, and with no character in his face, no heart in his expression. Ever since she had come to years of discretion she had distrusted men with absolutely regular features," she concluded, "and now she knew how right she had been—"

Judith was forced to smile at the peroration, and observed a little tearfully that she had not expected him to come, that she had sent him away of her own free will long ago.

"Then, my dear, he ought to have come back, and tried his luck again when you were in trouble. I have no patience with such fair-weather lovers; and he is despicable in the extreme. He is tied to Mrs. Hare's apron-strings again, more securely than before, and she leads him about in triumph; and I dare say makes much of him to prevent him ever wishing to go back to you. Lady Shenston and she have been spreading all sorts of reports."

"I know," said Judith, with quivering lips.

"But I never believed them. At least," she corrected herself, candidly, for it was a vague jealousy caused by what she had heard about Sir Julius that had really prevented her coming before—"I never for a moment credited that you had been spooning that horrid T. G.; trying to get him away from Winifred, as they said. It was too unlikely. You, who might marry anyone!"

"And will marry no one!" sighing.

"Ish! That's all nonsense! I am going up to Simla next week, and mean to take you with me; and you are going to make a tremendous sensation, and marry a member of council, and live happy ever after. Now, don't look so obstinate, child: I will take no refusal. Why should I not have a companion as well as anybody else?"

"You are the dearest, kindest woman in the world! but —"

"Also the least vain. It is not everybody, Miss Judith, would care to play second fiddle to a professional beauty like yourself!" with a merry laugh.

Her hand was taken and caressed affectionately.

"You may make light of it if you please, but I know all the kindness it implies, and love you dearly for it, and thank you! I have telegraphed home, and when I get an answer I will let you know what my plans must be. In the meantime—"

"In the meantime you are coming home with me. Your room is ready, and I have ordered the cosiest little dinner for two. All sweets and tasties! You can't resist that, can you?"

Judith hesitated, and coloured painfully when at last she answered, in a low voice,—

"I am not sure that they will let me leave here. You see, I owe some money, and until I get a remittance from England, they may consider me in pawn."

(To be concluded next week.)

(This story commenced in No. 2076. Back numbers can be obtained through all News-agents.)

THE VALUE OF FRESH AIR

Fresh air never killed anyone. On the contrary, it has preserved the lives of many, and given to thousands renewed health, and even those who suffer from any weakness of the throat and chest are now ordered to live as much as possible in the open air, and to keep their rooms well ventilated. The windows of sitting-rooms should be thrown wide open the first thing in the morning; not merely opened at the bottom, but at the top also, so as to allow the fresh air to circulate freely through the room, and clear and freshen up every nook and corner. It is also a good and healthy plan, when the blinds are pulled down and the curtains drawn of an evening, to leave, at any rate, one of the windows open at the top. It need not be left wide open, but just enough to keep the room fresh. The window need not be left open all night, for in some localities this would not be safe, but it does not give much trouble to close and bolt a window before putting out the lights. Important as fresh air is in the sitting-rooms during the day and in the evening, it is just as important in the bedroom, not only in the daytime, but also at night, when the door has to be kept shut for several hours at a stretch. When there is an open fireplace, which is the healthiest kind to have, the occupant should occasionally make sure that the register of the chimney is properly open. It is a wise precaution to light a fire in the bedroom now and again, so as to be certain that it draws properly, and that there is no obstruction in the chimney itself, for there is nothing so tiresome in a case of illness, etc., when a fire has to be lighted—perhaps in a great hurry—to find it will not draw, or worse still, to have the room filled with smoke. In the matter of stuffy bedrooms servants are the greatest offenders, for they seem to have a perfect dread of fresh air, to judge from the atmosphere to be encountered in their sleeping apartments and the indifference they display to its closeness; indeed, all the poorer classes, though of course there are exceptions, really seem to prefer a close, stuffy atmosphere to fresh air.

LANGUAGE fails to paint a woman as the eyes of a lover see her. Pearl rouge is more apt to hit the charmer.

TONY'S BUTTONS.

Looking over an old box, the other day, I came upon a handful of Tony's buttons. I call them Tony's buttons, for they are relics of past overalls and little pants long since worn out or laid aside that Tony used to wear.

Reverently I picked them out from the collection in the box, and, holding them in my hand, looked long and earnestly at those simple reminders of my little curly-headed boy.

Nearly every button was pulled out with a piece of the garment from which it came sewed fast to it. Well I remember how annoyed I often felt with Tony because his buttons were always coming off.

One overall in particular I recall—a dark blue, with white figures. Several buttons in my hand brought vividly to my mind the last time Tony wore that garment.

The image of my pretty little boy came back to me as I looked at those well-worn buttons—his bright, animated face; eyes sparkling in anticipation of the fun he would have at the party he was going to attend; his long, beautiful curls floating around as sweet a face as God ever gave a child; the little blue pants and overall, broad collar, finished at the neck with a blue and white tie. Surely Tony was sweet that day!

As I kissed him good-bye, I said (what made me do so?)—

"Now, Tony, don't pull off your buttons."

"No, mamma, and he was gone.

He didn't mean to. I knew it then, I know it better now, but the unreliable buttons came off in spite of boyish resolutions, and at night Tony came home looking quite demoralised. I did not scold him. I am glad I didn't. I only said—

"Naughty boy, your buttons are gone."

"No, mamma, I have got them all."

And out from the little pocket came the rebellious buttons, with unfortunate white figures hanging to them in doleful tatters.

I sighed as I looked at the wreck, and Tony said—

"Mamma, I can't help it; they will come off. But some day I'll grow big, and shan't wear overalls. Then you won't have to sew on the buttons. Won't that be nice?"

Nice! Oh, Tony, Tony, if you could only come back and pull off the buttons once more! I would not ask for greater happiness.

Mothers, don't scold the little fellows because they get the buttons off and bits of garment with them. At best the time is short that you will have the privilege of sewing them on, for our little boys soon grow up and go away from us, then someone besides mamma has the buttons to sew on.

And some—ah! some only use the buttons a few years. Then the Father who gave their sweet faces to us for a little time takes them back again, and we—only wait, hoping some day to see them once more.

ONE OF NATURE'S JOKES.—A species of Australian fern, which grows in the shape of the horn and antlers of deer and stag, has been aptly described as "one of Nature's jokes." The cause of this extraordinary reproduction of a feature of animal life has not been accounted for. It is altogether baffling to behold the thin green horns curving out of the tree trunk as realistically as if they were growing from the head of a stag, or to see the branching and magnificent antlers of a moose imitated even to the finest detail. This striking eccentricity is not by any means the only remarkable feature of fern growth. The wonderful manner in which these plants are propagated has challenged the admiration and awe of students. Under a magnifying-glass, hundreds of the minute spores which perform the function of seeds look like only the smallest atom, and so imperceptibly are they scattered from fern to fern that Shakespeare could think of no better synonym for love than "the secret of the fern seed," which "walks invisible."

Gems

NEVER employ yourself to discern the faults of others, but be careful to amend and prevent your own.

HAPPINESS is a perfume which one cannot shed over another without a few drops falling on one's self.

EVERY day is a leaf in life. When the day dawns it is a blank. Then are inscribed thereon our thoughts, words and actions.

A JUST man does justice to every man and everything; and then if he be also wise, he knows there is a depth of mercy and compassion due to the infirmities of man's nature.

THE world is unjust in its judgments; so it is in its reprisals. It speedily effaces the memory of the greatest services, and, when we can repeat them no more, we are neglected and thrown aside.

If you are annoyed or vexed at people, just remember it is not the right time to speak. Close your mouth—shut your teeth together firmly, and it will save you many a useless and unavailing regret, and many a bitter enemy.

SOME people seem to think it manly and smart to get in a passion and rave like a maniac; but instead of such a thing being manly and smart, it is childish and stupid. Whenever a man allows his temper to get the better of him, he is defeated—is the sport of unreason, of elements of destruction.

The policy of right-doing cannot be doubted. Every intelligent man and woman must see that in nearly every instance it pays richly and fully for whatever labour and self-sacrifice it may involve; and, in the few cases there may be where they cannot see this result, most of them have sufficient faith in the law to trust it.

TWENTIETH CENTURY PROVERBS.

Inspiration, perspiration, and desperation are the rations which make achievement fat. People who do not plan their future generally do not have any.

It is a great deal easier to be a good critic than to be even a passable performer.

It is a pretty illiterate man that does not have decided opinions on religion and politics.

Present tragedy makes fine future comedy. Many persons who are hailed as budding geniuses unfold into blooming fools.

Only fools make resolutions; only wise men keep them.

"Truth is stranger than fiction" with some persons should be rendered "Truth is more of a stranger than fiction."

Don't cry over spilt milk—be glad it isn't cream.

You might as well aim high as long as you are shooting.

Ignorance is anything but bliss to those who are compelled to be its associates.

A candied opinion is generally better than a candid one.

Credit is a convenient garment, but it is liable to become a little too tight for free movement.

UNFORTUNATELY PLACED.—The Rev. Mr. Spouter: "How did you like my sermon yesterday? What did you think of my exordium and peroration, eh?" Do Grumpe: "I thought they were too far apart."

IRISH PUNS.—Charles Lamb makes some famous puns. His mantle seems to have fallen on his namesake, Mr. Charles Lamb Kenney. This popular journalist was dining at the house of a friend, and by chance swallowed a bit of cork with his wine, which gave him a severe coughing fit. "Take care, my friend," said his next neighbour, with a very brilliant attempt at a witticism, "that's not the way to Cork." "No," gasped the sufferer, "it's the way to kill Kenney."

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Facetiæ

CONSIDER the man that is always punctual—how much time he wastes in waiting for other people.

WHAT the child receives free, what the young man steals, and what the old man buys—A kiss.

AT (at the football grounds): "Why don't they begin to play?" Dolly: "The surgeons haven't arrived yet."

WIFE: "You must think all women are alike." Husband: "Oh, no, I don't. I'd been a bachelor if they were."

"You talk a great deal in your sleep, John," said Mrs. Henpeck. "It's the only chance I get," said John, meekly.

We always envy a fat woman when we see her laughing. There seems to be so much of her that is having a good time.

"PAPA, what is an agnostic?" asked Johnny Cumsio. "An agnostic, Johnny, is a man who knows very little, and is not sure of that."

"Do you think those shoes are worth mending?" "Well, yes, if I sole and heel them and put new uppers on them. The strings are still good."

At an examination of students, one young gentleman, being asked to describe Henry the Eighth, replied, "He was a professional widower."

A WOMAN cannot be altogether unhappy when the woman she has invited to supper asks her to write down her receipt for that cream pie.

MAUD: "Your chaperon seems very angry with you." MAMIE: "Yes. I haven't left her alone long enough this evening to give her a chance to flirt."

"WHY," said a counsel to a witness, "are you so very precise in your statement? Are you afraid of telling an untruth?" Witness (promptly): "No, sir."

A YOUNG lady ate half a wedding-cake, then tried to dream of her future husband. Now she says she would rather die than marry the man she saw in that dream.

"AND John—what is he doing?" asked Mrs. Billingsly. "He is studying pharmacy now." "Well, the idea! Who'd a thought that John would ever took to farming?"

THE following play upon words is said to be the utterance of an eminent judge: "Marriage is an institution intended to keep women out of mischief and get them into trouble."

"MR dear Melanie," said a young husband, "I must say that this pudding tastes very bad." "All imagination," said his wife; "it says in the cookery-book that it tastes excellent."

A WISE young man: "Let's have a drink," said Chappie, as the steamship left the pier. "No," returned Borrowton; "let us wait until we are outside. I never drink behind the bar."

SIMPSON: "I wonder what kind of line it is that Budkins uses when he goes fishing. It always breaks just as he is landing the biggest fish you ever saw." Sniffer: "It's nothing but 'yam.'"

"I OFTEN wonder," he said, as they stood in the yellowness of a moonlit night, "what my last words will be." And not a vestige of sarcastic intent lurked in her mind as she answered, "So do I, George. I should so love to hear them."

HUSBAND of Authoress: "My dear, you are famous now. Your picture is in the newspapers." Authoress takes one glance and bursts into tears. Husband: "Why, my dear, what is the matter?" Authoress: "The horrid things have made me with a last year's haquet on!"

"THERE's a man in Baltimore who is the lucky possessor of Benjamin Franklin's watch." "That's nothing. I know a man who has Adam's apple."

GENTLEMAN, addressing a Sheffield audience of working men: "Friends, I am a self-made man." A voice from the audience: "Ah, gov'nor, you'd ha' done better to put the job out."

"YOU should not be so sensitive. You do not find me walking around with a chip on my shoulder." "That's so. I should call that thing you carry on your shoulders a block."

"BROWNSTONE has cured his wife of everlasting talking." "How, for goodness' sake?" "He told her that she looked prettier with her mouth closed, and now she can hardly be induced to utter a syllable."

No matter how strongly a man pretends that he doesn't believe in ghosts, it may be doubted if he ever goes by a churchyard at midnight without feeling as if something were going to clutch him from behind.

HE: "I would like to be at your side in the beautiful moonlight like this for ever." SHE: "Well, George, you can marry me." HE: "That's true; but, you see, it's impossible to make sure of always having the moonlight."

"MA," said a frightened little boy, "do you see that goat butting my shadow?" "Yes, Rockie, but that doesn't hurt you." "No, not now; but if he likes to butt my shadow as hard as that, what do you think he'll do when he sees me?"

RECENTLY a letter of introduction was handed by an actor to a manager, which described the presenter as an actor of much merit, and concluded: "He plays Virginius, Richelieu, Hamlet, Shylock, and billiards. He plays billiards the best."

HOST: "Just another wee drap 'fore you go." Guest: "Na, na, a'll tak na mair. I'm in a new lodgin' and I'm no vera weel acquainted with the stairs."

TOURIST No. 1: "That Italian is a fine specimen of a man. See how he carries himself." Tourist No. 2: "Yes, and see how he lets his wife carry everything else."

CHAFFIE: "I think I shall—aw—novalh have to stwuggle for gweakness. Aw, I was born gweat, doncherknow?" Crusty: "Good gracious, how you must have shrunk."

THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT TREES.—"My favourite," she said, "is the oak. It is so noble, so magnificent in its strength. But what is your favourite?" "Yew," he replied.

THE ELECTRIC SHOCK!—Bride (throwing her arms about his neck): "You are my prisoner for life." Groom: "It's not imprisonment for life, love; it's capital punishment."

"CAN'T you hurry a bit, Clara? We must catch the Sawyers and congratulate them on their marriage." "There's no use hurrying for that—it's too late to congratulate them, anyhow; they've been married a month."

ARTIST: "Well, sir, what do you think of this—'Ajax Defying the Lightning'?" Patron (something in the city): "Ahl—um—yes; not at all bad, not at all. But—er—don't you think the—er—um—the arm's a little out of the prospectus?"

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Helpful Talks

BY THE EDITOR.

The Editor is pleased to hear from his readers at any time.

All letters must give the name and address of the writers, not for publication but as a guarantee of good faith.

TED.—From Liverpool to New York is 3,016 miles.

GIRTY.—The mother, brothers, and sisters would share equally.

LANDLADY.—You may keep a lodger's goods to cover rent, but you have no legal right to sell them.

LADYBIRD.—The name "Beaumont" is pronounced "Boe-mont," with the long sound of "o," as in "hoe," "doe," etc.

TIM.—You are not requiring a written discharge from the Volunteers. A discharge from the Army discharges you from everything.

TURPENTINE.—People are not imprisoned for debt, but for contempt of court. Incarceration does not, therefore, wipe out indebtedness.

BERT.—No; the husband may not legally marry until he has got a divorce, which in the circumstances he could easily do. Apply to a lawyer.

A. L.—All arrears of rent may be recovered through the County Court. A landlord cannot distrain for rent after he has given up legal possession of the house.

CONSTANT READER.—With the exception of certain fees to army and prison chaplains, it is substantially true to say that the Church receives no income from the State.

CLEMENT.—Every man who is a householder, no matter what his rent, is entitled to be put on the roll of voters, and to vote at both Parliamentary and municipal elections.

TROUBLED ONE.—The person who ordered the goods is liable in payment to the person of whom he ordered them, but he has his remedy against the carrier who lost the goods in transit.

BOB.—The penny stamp on a cheque is, of course, paid for by the drawer of the cheque; the receipt stamp is paid for by the receiver of the money who gives the receipt. They are two different things altogether.

COMEDY.—I doubt if there is a market for songs anywhere. Most of the "comics" write their own, but no doubt some would gladly be spared the labour, and you may perhaps reach them by letters addressed to the care of managers of the different music halls.

M. T.—The acorns which are not bitter are largely used as food in Spain, Algeria, and other Mediterranean countries, and are preferred to chestnuts. The Indians in California pound up acorns in a mortar and make cakes and mash out of the meal. The kind of acorns found in this country are, I presume, too bitter for use in the manner stated.

L. T. W.—A house of correction for offenders is commonly called in England a bridewell. The name is derived from the locality of the ancient London house of correction, which was used for hospital purposes. It was founded by Edward VI. on the site of St. Bride's Well in Blackfriars, a well-known object of pilgrimage in other days.

F. F.—An aneurism is a soft, pulsating tumour, arising from the preternatural dilation of ruptures of the coats of an artery. Any artery of the body is liable to it. The cure of aneurism is stated to consist in the obliteration of the diseased portion of the artery, by passing a ligature around the sound portion of the vessel at some distance above the locality of the tumour.

KIT.—If you are a domestic servant you may claim a month's notice.

RUFUS.—Prince Rodolph of Austria committed suicide on January 30, 1889.

DODO.—The party who benefited by your brother's effects is liable for his debts to the amount of the property which he left.

ONE IN TROUBLE.—As the house was taken in your name, the landlord can come down upon your goods.

BIRDIE.—There is not now any civilised country where a criminal escaping from Great Britain will not be arrested and delivered up.

IDLE.—You can deal directly with the Agent-General for Queensland, Westminster Chambers, Victoria Street, Westminster, S.W. Write to him, stating your desire.

MARSH.—Yes; Mary Queen of Scots had several watches, two of which are said to have been shaped like skulls. Queen Elizabeth, it is said, had twenty-four watches of different kinds.

HUGH.—You are too old for the Navy by fully four years; but your measurements are sufficient for the Fourth Dragoon Guards, the Fifth Lancers, or Sixth Dragoons (Inniskillings). Any recruiting sergeant can take you for these regiments, which are all distinctly Irish, and of good reputation.

LESLIE.—You mean does the Manchester Ship Canal go through the River Mersey? No, it actually reaches the estuary of the Mersey at Runcorn, but does not enter there, being continued alongside the sea to Eastham, where it enters through locks; the latter are rendered necessary by the fact that Manchester stands some sixty feet above sea level.

WORRIED ANNIE.—When seized with cramp during the night endeavour, if possible, to rise and stamp round the room, or, failing ability to do so, have the stiffening limb well rubbed, either with the open hand or with strong whisky or turpentine, swathing it in any flannel garment at hand when the pain begins to lessen. To prevent attacks, bathe the limbs in hot water containing mustard immediately before lying down. If you are of full habit, rest a little oftener during the day than you have been doing hitherto.

DARCY.—Philip Melancthon, who acted so prominent a part in the German Reformation, and who was inferior only to Luther and Calvin among the reformers, was never ordained and never entered the pulpit. He often wrote sermons for others, and delivered in his house practical lectures, which were taken down by some of his hearers and published as sermons. As has been said, he was only a lay theologian, yet he wielded a powerful influence. On April 9, 1860, the tricentennial anniversary of his death was celebrated throughout Protestant Germany. He is described as of small stature and delicate frame. A new edition of his works was published in 1866.

SLEEPLESS.—How to get to sleep is a matter of high importance to many persons besides yourself. Nervous persons who are troubled with wakefulness and excitability usually have a strong tendency of blood to the brain, with cold extremities. The pressure of blood on the brain keeps it in a stimulated or wakeful state, and the pulsations in the head are often painful. Let such rise and chafe the body and extremities with a brush or towel, or rub smartly with the hands to promote a circulation and withdraw the excessive quantity of blood from the brain, and they will fall asleep in a short time. A cold bath, or a rapid walk in the open air, or going up and down stairs a few times, just before retiring, will aid in equalising circulation and promote sleep. These rules are simple and easy of application in castle or cabin, and may minister to the comfort of thousands who would freely expend money for an anodyne to promote "Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

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Published by the Proprietors at 50-52, Ludgate Hill, and Printed by GLENNY'S PRINTING WORKS, LTD., Newspaper Buildings, Portugal St., Strand, W.C.